Unstable Territories: Imaging and Imagining the Contemporary Ruin

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania, November 2018

Declaration of Originality

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16 November 2018

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Acknowledgements

I thank the University of Tasmania for their support and their funding of this research project. I thank my supervisors, Dr Megan Keating and Dr Llewellyn Negrin, for their sustained professionalism, consistent and inspired support, and their encouragement throughout the course of this project. Their guidance, insight and critical analysis have helped facilitate the resolution of this project. This exegesis was copyedited by Dr Jacqueline Fox.

I would also like to give special thanks to my great friends, Tracey Diggins and Lynda Warner, for the professionalism involved in the formatting of the exegesis document and the many other technical issues that I encountered over the duration of the project. Their loyalty, humour, warm friendship and many kindnesses have been above the call of duty and greatly appreciated.

Very special thanks also to the wonderful Jane Slade for the friendship catch-ups and de-briefing ‘sanity’ sessions over coffee. Your positivity, humour and insights have been invaluable in releasing the tension valve. The support and friendship of my colleagues, Alex and Olivia, at Fahan School is also much appreciated.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to my lovely, long-suffering husband, best friend and team player for his clear and reasoned critical faculties, fortitude as well as the valued strength of belief and loyalty he has exhibited over the duration of the project.

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Abstract

This studio-based project seeks to challenge the picturesque conventions governing the depiction of ruins in the past and to find a new set of visual strategies more appropriate to the contemporary experience of ruins in urban settings.

Pivotal to the project has been the case study of a unique, local urban ruin site, the Myer site (2007-2014). It has been used as an example of the distinctive characteristics of a contemporary unscenic ruin in order to establish a structural framework for the development of visual strategies that take account of the physical and spatial limitations of a specific site.

These strategies pose challenges and establish visual alternatives to the picturesque aesthetic, and demonstrate its inadequacy for dealing with both the imaging and imagining of the experiential, compromised condition of contemporaneous ruins.

The depiction of this site has wider implications for the field of ruin scholarship and the research considers this challenge by posing two questions:

1. How is picturesque space changed when its panoramic scope is compromised by the enclosed and impeded physical and visual reality of contemporary urban ruin sites?

2. How do the visual strategies of destabilisation and fragmentation generate new visual outcomes when imaging and imagining contemporary ruins?

The research examines the Western artistic tradition of the representation of ruins, identifying two categories of ruin: 1) the *scenic* ruin, which encompasses the Romantic tradition of the picturesque, ruin gazing and ruin lust; and 2) the *unscenic* ruin, which includes three sub-types – the anxious, the catastrophic and the prosaic ruin.

The scenic ruin tradition is analysed through artworks by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, J.W.M. Turner, John Constable, Caspar David Friedrich and its contemporary iteration, ruin porn, while discussion of the unscenic ruin is outlined through an analysis of artwork by Anselm Kiefer, Joel Meyerowitz and Ed Ruscha's reworking of *The Course of Empire* series by Thomas D. Cole. It is in relation to the latter category of ruin, in particular, that the prosaic ruin of this project is situated.

Theoretically, the project is supported by the concepts of 'unscenic nature' as outlined by Yuriko Saito, and *'terrain vague'* formulated by Ignasi de Sola Morales, which best describe the conditional state of unscenic sites as well as highlighting aesthetic alternatives to picturesque spatial formula.

The visual strategies that have been employed include patterns of visual disturbance, which impede clear perception, and fragmentation achieved through collage as imagined through the state of collapse. These strategies have resulted in two distinct bodies of artwork across two media: colour wood cut prints and monochrome graphite, charcoal and pencil drawings.

Identifying that the current field of ruin representation is largely silent on the picturing of ruins in urban settings, this research establishes two significant and innovative alternatives that are appropriate to the experience of the contemporary ruin.

Introduction

The terms ruin gazing, ruin lust, ruinscape, the 'craze' for ruins and ruin porn are used frequently within the research project.

As definitional categories these terms reflect the research's engagement with contemporary ruin scholarship as well as acknowledging the proliferation of popular culture discussions about ruins. The frequency of their appearance in both academic discussion and the contemporary 'blogosphere', which is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as a 'records of personal thought and opinions on the internet considered as a group'. This suggests that the field of contemporary ruin scholarship coexists with a generalised popular interest that contributes to an invigorated, complex and robust current discussion surrounding our recent understanding of ruins on a variety of levels. The following discussion provides definitions and citations of these terms as they present within contemporary ruin theoretical debate, underscoring their usage and academic provenance and their relevance as terms that contribute to the framing of the overall project outcomes.

In the last thirty years there has been an intensification of both popular and scholarly interest in ruins from the recent past. This observation is reinforced by the major exhibition at Tate Britain, London, titled *Ruin Lust: Artists' Fascination with Ruins, from Turner to the Present Day* curated by Brian Dillon, 2014, the exhibition *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed* held at the Getty Center, Los Angeles, 1997 as well

as collections and journal articles on the social, cultural and historical representations of ruins and decay. These include the books, *Ruins of Modernity,* edited by Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, and *Ruins: Documents of Contemporary Art,* edited by Brian Dillon.

Ruin Gazing – The term ruin gazing is employed frequently within the discussion in Chapter One.

As a practice of viewing ruins as objects of aesthetic appreciation it became widespread 'toward the end of the eighteenth century, the excavation of Pompeii uncovered murals… and quickly became one of romanticism's favourite sites for ruin gazing' (Hell & Schönle 2010, p. 2). The popularity of 'gazing' particularly at the ruins of Pompeii and Rome became an established part of the Grand Tour through Europe.

Ruin gazing reflectively presents the visual aesthetic appeal and conceptual legacy of ruins, helping to situate those of the past within a present-day perspective as is reinforced by the following quote:

> While our ruin gaze is informed by centuries of images and their interpretations, each new incidence of massive devastation forces rereading of the previous ones (2010, p. 4).

Ruin Lust – As a scholarly term, ruin lust appears in the in the curatorial essay by Brian Dillon, for the 2014 exhibition *Ruin Lust: Artists' Fascination with Ruins from Turner to the Present Day*, at the Tate Gallery, London. Dillon states that it is derived from a German term, 'Ruinenlust,' revived by, the scholar and novelist Rose Macaulay, in her 1953 book, *The Pleasure of Ruins,* (p. 5) where she links the visualisation of ruins to pleasure which borders on obsession.

Dillon's interpretation of the German term, Ruinenlust charts the persistence of historic

ruin aesthetics into the present, posing questions about their seductive and compelling qualities.

Craze – Visually, this cultured 'craze' for ruins manifested itself in the creation of artificial ruins situated in gentrified landscape and garden design settings which took the form of classical column and temple fragments, decaying castle follies and grotto structures (Dillon 2014, p. 4).

Ruin Porn – The academic and researcher Melanie McNaughton argues that 'Ruin porn belongs to a set of compounds, first appearing in the 1970s, that emphasise the "sensuous or sensational aspects of a nonsexual subject"' (McNaughton 2018, p. 1).

The expression 'ruin porn' describes the photographic genre that visually depicts a popular obsession with the portrayal of the disintegrating architectural icons of the American Dream such as the industrial ruins of Detroit. It points to a ghoulish fascination surrounding images of abandonment (Malone 2011, p. 4) as manifested by the upsurge in the number of books of photography about decay, disintegration and neglect such as abandoned amusement parks, abandoned asylums, haunted asylums and the advent or tours (ruin tourism) to such sites. The term ruin porn suggests that this form of visual obsession overlaps with the visual elements of sexual representation inherent in 'soft pornography, such as voyeurism; pleasurable gratification and exploitation' (McNaughton 2018, p. 1).

This research project locates ruin porn within a romantic and scenic tradition of ruin depiction. It provides an analysis of the underlying preoccupations of the genre and the visual tropes that frame it within a scenic portrayal of ruination and this is discussed in detail within Chapter One – The Scenic Ruin.

Ruinscape – The term ruinscape is a hybrid term amalgamating ruin and post-industrial

urban or catastrophic damage with urban landscapes. For example, the destruction of Berlin at the end of World War II, as cited in the introduction to the collection of essays, 'Ruins of Modernity', edited by Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (2010, p. 11).

My studio-based project situates itself within this field, focusing on those ruins that I define as prosaic, commonplace, visually unscenic and unspectacular but contemporaneously ubiquitous. These ruins stand in marked contrast to the wonderful historical, aestheticised design objects or World Heritage site ruins that are framed through the picturesque and ruin lust traditions. Much of the history of the ruin in Western art has framed it in terms of a scenic gaze. The writer and curator, Brian Dillon comments that 'this decades-long flowering of ruin lust had its roots in a mode of seeing-more precisely, the framing of a ruin in a landscape' (2014, p. 6). This project seeks to challenge this tradition, portraying the ruin not as an object of nostalgic contemplation, but as unscenic and prosaic.

Two research questions have driven the production of the artwork and contextually shaped the visual strategies into two separate series of artworks that reflect familiar conditions of recent ruin sites. The research questions that have guided this investigation are:

1. How is picturesque space changed when its panoramic scope is compromised by the enclosed and impeded physical and visual reality of contemporary urban ruin sites?

2. How do the visual strategies of instability, destabilisation, fragmentation and the state of collapse generate new visual outcomes when imaging and imagining contemporary ruins?

This research refers to the Romantic craze for ruins in the nineteenth century, and its aesthetic tradition of spatial ruin representation, as the 'scenic ruin'. The scenic ruin is a term coined to describe illusory spatial relationships featuring ruins amongst other objects such as trees, animals, machinery as compositional props in landscape settings.

Such ruins lead the eye compositionally through panoramic, atmospheric views to a vanishing point in distant space or outside the picture plane to create harmonious, unified pictorial space as exemplified by key exponents such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi, J.M.W. Turner, John Constable, William Gilpin, Caspar David Friedrich, as well as the contemporary romantic manifestation of Ruin Porn.

A primary motivation of this project was the desire to examine the wider implications of this nostalgic scenic spatial legacy and to interrogate its appropriateness for the imaging and imagining of contemporary urban ruin sites. In this project such sites are referred to as 'unscenic ruins', and encompass both catastrophic and prosaic ruins. The visual information present at such unscenic ruin sites includes both the chaotic and the bland, which compromise the harmonious and unified spatial legacy of the scenic ruin. The goal of this research has been to create artwork that accounts for the visual disparities between the spatial tradition of the picturesque and the experiential reality of contemporary ruinscapes, which are often closed off from the viewer by physical barriers, which impede access. Such constrictions physically force an engagement with the visual dynamics of the foreground rather than drawing the viewer in, as occurs in the picturesque presentation of ruins.

However the research acknowledges artistic precedents such as the oil painting, *Appia Antica*, 1945-50 by Giorgio De Chirico that demonstrate the capacity of historical ruins to evoke both a spiritual and metaphysical search for meaning beyond their self-evident reality (Tate Britain, 2019, p. 1).

The representation of historical ruins as trans historical fragments, enigmatically unknowable in their incompleteness is one aspect amongst others attached to 'the various kinds of pleasure given by the spectacle of ruined buildings' (Macaulay 1953, p. xv). Their seemingly mysterious and transcendental power to elicit contemplative, rapturous

and speculatively uplifting responses across time forms the basis of her work, *The Pleasure of Ruins*. At the conclusion of this work however, Macaulay addresses within a 'Note on New Ruins', the rawness and anxiety that recent destruction and collapse (based upon her own personal experience of the London Blitz) causes. Her enduring statement regarding the visceral, gut-wrenching power of their immediate materiality, 'their smell of fire and mortality' (Macaulay 1953, p. 453) divides such ruin reality from a search for transcendent or hidden meaning. However, this research acknowledges that the senselessness of death and destruction cause in many a deep questioning surrounding the futility of catastrophic ruin that results in a spiritual or faith-based religious search for meaning in the aftermath of destruction.

Such introspective spiritual and metaphysical searches for meaning frame both romantic and catastrophic ruins and are acknowledged as fundamental to the experience and understanding of ruin. As states of mind their transcendental aspects are however, outside the scope of this research project that locates its focus upon ruins characterised as prosaic, and unscenic urban ruin waste grounds sites of dereliction and abandonment believing that such spaces present equally valid resources for imaging and imagining the contemporary ruin.

The material reality of such urban sites does cause public anxiety and dismay as they pragmatically represent wasted property assets that affront civic pride and economic rationalism. Equally they may be ignored or forgotten sites that elicit ambivalent responses but as such they are unlikely to provoke 'searches for meaning beyond their self-evident reality' (Tate Britain, 2019, p. 1), that is consistent with romantic metaphysical or spiritual framings of ruin.

The project has evolved through two stages, producing two bodies of distinctly different artworks. The first comprises a series of colour woodcut prints and the second, a series

of monochromatic graphite, charcoal and silver and gold pencil drawings. Stage one began with the encounter of the ruin status of the local, inner city, abandoned Myer site, in Liverpool Street, Hobart. The condition of this former commercial site resulted from a catastrophic fire event in 2007. The site remained undeveloped, presenting as a barrier fenced crater in the CBD of Hobart, until 2014. The case study observes the changes that the site underwent, beginning with the immediate, abrupt, catastrophic transition to ruin, and ending as an enclosed weed and litter-infested wasteground eyesore, and prioritises the experiential physical, visual and perceptual challenges that characterise the contemporary reality of an urban ruin site.

The Myer site case study is presented because it typifies the material experience of an unscenic urban ruin, situated in a prime real estate setting. It exhibited material that ranged from a dull, physical innocuousness to a fragmented chaotic mishmash of debris, observed through barriers that prevented an unimpeded view of the site. These intrusive impediments also presented destabilising perceptual and visual challenges as the functional necessity of sightline barriers and blockages encountered on site resisted and broke down the spatial unity of traditional picturesque spatial formula. This compromised visual information (referred to as imperfect information within the research) has been interpreted through visual strategies that preference foreground space such as physical instability, perceptual destabilisation and spatial fragmentation. As such, the totality of experience at unscenic ruins is not reliant upon traditional illusory figure/ground spatial formulae or vanishing point perspective when accounting for the physical, spatial and perceptual challenges encountered on site due to barrier fencing interference and sightline blockages.

Stage two of my research moved away from the Myer site and dealt with imagined ruinscapes, employing fragmentation through collage as the principal strategy, together

with the ancillary strategies of intricate detail and vertical stacking.

The Myer site's appearance as a derelict urban ruin site was terminated unexpectedly in early 2014, when the construction and redevelopment phase began. As a result, the direction of the project broadened from the experiential and the site specific. The second phase responded to the conditional strategies established during the case study but employed more imaginative strategies to interrogate imagined ruinscapes.

The research has identified these strategies as apt ways to image the atypical visual and spatial features of real-time ruins. It has embraced their destabilising properties and considered their speculative and imaginative possibilities in order to create new visual artwork.

The contemporary urban ruin is theoretically contextualised through the concept of 'unscenic nature', outlined by Yuriko Saito's 1998 essay. Saito argues there is a bias toward the grand and spectacular views of the scenic picturesque tradition or 'easy beauty' (1998 p. 1), that disregards the aesthetic of scenically challenged parts of nature. Social theorist Ignasi Sola- Morales also advocates for a reassessment of the prosaic, scenically challenged qualities to be found in indeterminate and derelict urban spaces through the concept of *'terrain vague'* (1995 p. 112).

The research is also informed by the writings of Gilda Williams, Svetlana Boym, Rose McCauley, Brian Dillon, Andreas Huyssen and Tim Edensor, and Caitlin De Silvey, as they probe distinctions in the framing and representation of visually unappealing ruin sites and speculate upon the social anxiety that they cause. As such, they require visual strategies that account for the destabilising effects of their visual and perceptual interference.

The exegesis is divided into four chapters.

Chapter One contextualises the scenic ruin through a tradition of ruin gazing that is analysed through an examination of its visual depiction, ascribed meanings and trans historic endurance by way of an in depth discussion of the tropes of the romantic tradition and an analysis of picturesque space. Key examples include Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Vedute di Roma* etchings, *Veduta di Campo Vaccino* and *Veduta di Campo Vaccino Looking toward the Temple of Castor and Pollux*; J.M.W. Turner's *Tintern Abbey, The Crossing and Chancel, Looking toward the East Window*; John Constable's *Hadleigh Castle*, *The Mouth of the Thames – Morning after a Stormy Night*; William Gilpin's *Landscape with a Lake and Ruins; a Tree in the Foreground, Mountains in the Distance;* and Caspar David Friedrich's *The Ruins of Eldena Abbey, near Greifswald* and *Ruin of Eldena in the Giant Mountains*. Through these examples I develop the argument that such spatial tropes are inadequate to deal with the spatial incongruity, disorder and disunity characteristic of contemporary urban ruins. The spatial and colour embellishments of Ruin Porn are cited as typifying examples of the disconnection that occurs between the squalid reality of urban dilapidation and the resilient tropes of the romantic ruin depicted through the spectacle of over-hyped fantasy scenarios of the rise and fall of industrial empires (McNaughton 2018, p. 2).

Chapter Two discusses a contrasting approach to the depiction of ruins, denoted as the 'unscenic ruin', which comprises a number of sub-types, including the anxious, catastrophic and prosaic ruin. Anselm Kiefer's work *Tempelhof* and David Meyerowitz's photographic documentary, *Aftermath*, *Assembled Panorama of the Plaza, Looking South and West*, are discussed as examples of the first two sub-types while Ed Ruscha's reworking of Thomas D. Cole's series, *The Course of Empire* and Merilyn Fairskye's series on Pripyat near Chernobyl are presented as exemplars of the prosaic ruin which most closely align with my approach to the ruin. An examination of

the Myer site case study and the wider ramifications of urban real estate ruin anxiety are also introduced in this chapter. The concept of unscenic nature is used to reinforce the proposition that spaces lacking in picturesque aesthetic attributes can provide positive exciting alternative spatial and perceptual possibilities in visually accounting for commonplace ruin. The theory of *terrain vague* is cited in relation to the physicality of the Myer site, but is also used more broadly to shed light on why unproductive urban wasteground sites incite commercial public disquiet.

Chapter Three presents a range of artists whose visual strategies have informed my work. These comprise works which utilise interference patterns such as the Benday dot, raster and the filter of banding lines to create visual and perceptual instability and uncertainty. Examples discussed in this regard include *Haystack no. 2* by Roy Lichtenstein, *Girlfriends* and *Bunnies* by Sigmar Polke, and the diptych, *Formations 1* and *2* by Christiane Baumgartner. The final artwork examples provided by Juan Gris, *The Sun Blind* and Robert Klippel, *LS111,* shift the contextual focus to the visual strategy of fragmentation through collage, which addresses the imaging intentions behind the graphite and coloured pencil drawing series. These works are motivated by a similar intention as the experientially driven wood cut series: to create works that achieve visual disorientation and flatten the pictorial space.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological strategies explored and implemented to address the questions underpinning the research artwork outcomes. The two major strategies for subverting picturesque conventions in the depiction of ruins – the unstable image and fragmentation through collage – are discussed through key examples from the two bodies of work. In the series of colour wood block prints the main strategy employed is visual instability caused by interference patterns, while the series of monotone graphite and silver and gold coloured pencil drawings is based on inventing

and imagining collapse through the fragmentary cut and paste process of collage.

The model proposed by this research seeks to expand the scope of the enquiry into ruins found in urban settings that are overlooked or hidden from view and thus unscenic, in both their ramshackle appearance and the scenically compromised spatial relationships of their enclosed urban settings. The resulting artwork has been driven by both first-hand experience and imagination, and was garnered initially from observation of the overlooked, atypical features of one specific site which was used to encompass the wider implications for imaging other similar urban sites. The nature of the enquiry evolved and expanded during the course of the making process to reflect an active engagement with the breadth of imaging possibility, aiming to insert the new print and drawing image outcomes within the established body of ongoing ruin scholarship as exemplified through the discussion of key artistic exponents, theorists, art historians and contemporary writers.

Chapter One

The Scenic Ruin

1. Introduction to The Romantic Ruin, The Scenic Gaze and Ruin Porn

By the eighteenth century, a recognisable 'ruin lust' was well established in European culture. It ghosts some of the key aesthetic debates of the century-concerning the categories for example, of the sublime, the picturesque and the gothic – and its presence both in painting and in the craze for artificial ruins that is so much a part of garden and landscape design of the era (Dillon 2011, p. 12).

Brian Dillon, credits the Renaissance with triggering an interest in the obsolete architectural remains of the Roman Forum stating that:

> Classical remains may have offered Renaissance poets artists and architects elevating models for their own endeavours… Piranesi was perhaps the most alert to catching the competing inflections in the voice of ancient ruins… (2014, p. 6).

My work challenges this tradition by portraying the ruin not as an object of nostalgic contemplation but as unscenic and prosaic. In order to understand the significance of this project, it is necessary to outline the tradition against which my work is reacting. This is the focus of Chapter One.

Ruin gazing as a term of reference for this research implies an idealised and anachronistic theoretical and pictorial framing, as encompassed and characterised within Classical, Romantic and Picturesque representations of the ruin (Hell and Schönle 2010, pp. 1-8). A perception could be formed that interest in classical ruins as poetic inspiration intensified during the Romantic period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and this is evidenced by the considerable number of examples of

their depiction and interpretation within literature, poetry and the visual arts (Dillon 2014, p. 6). The ruin gazing tradition emerged from the excavation of classical statuary, such as the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Laocoon* in the late Renaissance, prompting a sense of wonder at the aesthetic beauty of these discoveries. A subsequent reconsideration of the importance of the partially buried architectural remains of the Roman Forum and a craze for aestheticising and moralising the classical fragment followed (Hell and Schönle 2010, p.6). A range of prescribed meanings in accordance with the established romantic narratives of the time, as well as a pleasurable pictorial aestheticisation, was applied to such excavated fragmentary remains, culminating in a term 'ruin lust'.

Understanding the ongoing romantic representational legacy of these meanings and the renewed interest in both historical and contemporary ruins is central to the discussion within this chapter.

All ruins are the consequence of structural collapse, either as the result of a catastrophic man-made event, structural decay or a natural disaster. Ruins may begin as inconsequential fragmentary remains and as such 'remind us of, amongst other things, the difference between rubble, the unformed mass of debris, and the ruins that are a well-framed window into the past. Rubble is a material without significance; it is a matter destined to be removed. By contrast, the term "ruins" evokes traditions, visual codes, and a wealth of signification' (Puff 2010, p. 254).

This chapter discusses the field of scenic ruin scholarship within the traditions of:

The Classical Fragment, centering on the *Vedute di Roma* etchings series by Piranesi.

Romanticism and Ruin Gazing, when there was a craze for the portrayal of Classical, Medieval and Gothic ruins in Western art, literature and garden design and including a discussion of the tradition of the folly or sham ruin.

Ruin Porn, the current romantic fetishisation of catastrophic neglect and urban decay in the American Rust Belt cities such as Detroit. These are the over-saturated coloured Photoshop enhancements of rotting, derelict urban dilapidation aestheticised through nostalgic, emotionally manipulative ploys that airbrush away the anxiety and, the social and political causes relating to the material reality of such sites. Ruin Porn constructs a highly stylised aesthetic, prescribing meaning to a targeted response for the viewer (McNaughton 2018, p. 3).

The discussion centres on outlining the ways Romanticism sought to attach meaning to ruins through concepts such as nostalgia,[1] sentimentality, yearning and the portentous, and acknowledges their importance in the aestheticising of material remains into ruin. It also encompasses enduring romantic themes, such as the drama of the rise and fall of great empires and the pleasurable attraction to melancholic collapse in landscape settings, by unpicking their defining legacy in regard to the scenic ruin gazing and Romantic traditions.

[1] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries nostalgia was understood in terms of a melancholic longing for an unattainable and idealised version of a past, the existence of which could never be verified. As a concept it remained a dominant emotional response within the grand narratives of the time (Huyssen 2010, p. 21).

2. The Classical Fragment

2.1 Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778)

'More or less consciously the subsequent romantic conception of antiquity and of Rome itself as Roman derives from the visual filter originally created by Piranesi.'
(Ficacci 2000, p 13)

The Renaissance triggered an interest in the obsolete and collapsing architectural remains of the Roman Forum which inspired architects and artists. In later times, Piranesi was a key figure in the reappraisal of this process and his imagery significantly influenced the aesthetics of the scenic, romantic tradition, establishing a craze for ruins as elegiac objects signifying nostalgia, longing, sorrow, wonder and fascination. This craze is known as ruin lust.

Piranesi moved to Rome in the mid eighteenth century in order to devote his artistic focus to the wondrous ruins establishing a 'print workshop, and an atelier extensively patronised by Grand Tourists in search of prints, interior designs and antique statuary' (Holden 2014, p. 16). He trained as an engineer specialising in excavation but was also a master architectural draftsman who believed ancient Rome to be the centre of civilisation. He is famous for incredibly precise and distinctive etching and engraving studies of Classical Roman ruins and of architectural fragments titled *Veduti di Roma,* 1750-1778 (2014, p. 16).

Piranesi's 135 etchings, dating from 1748-1774 rendered the fragmented ruins of ancient Rome, popularising an appreciation of decay, deterioration and collapse as a culturally uplifting experience. Fragments of partially buried arches and columns had

lain prosaically disregarded for fifteen hundred years in the *Campo di Vaccino* (Cow Pasture) area of the Forum. Piranesi's imaging and visual augmentation of classical Roman ruins introduced the upper-class cultural tourists of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, by way of a visual souvenir, to an aesthetic appraisal of previously ignored Roman ruins.

An analysis of selected examples of the *Vedute di Roma* series allows the conclusion to be drawn that Piranesi was one of the first artists to apply a scenic aesthetic to decay, conferring the status of refinement and gentility that characterises the Romantic ruin. He drew from life on such sites constantly and interpreted the sketches into etchings such as in the *Vedute di Roma* series. The print curator Luigi Ficacci records this by stating that 'Piranesi continued with his studies of Roman antiquities over the course of ten years between the mid 1740s and the mid 1750s. He sought out remains by excavating them, drawing their plans and scenic context' (2000, p. 17).

The 1772 etchings, *Veduta di Campo Vaccino* (Fig. 1) and *Veduta di Campo Vaccino [Roman Forum with the Temple of Castor and Pollux to the right]* (Fig. 2) provide an example of this.

The etchings detailing the panorama of the area record the fragments of arches, columns and statues emerging from an accumulation of sediment and pasture. Cattle graze amongst the protruding fragments, tended by peasants. The *Veduta* depicts the area in its prosaic state, before it was excavated and restored, in order that it reflect the Forum's past magnificence.

Piranesi's embellishments exaggerate the scale of the fragments, emphasising the monumentality of the excavated ruins to fit in with his conception that the Roman civilisation was the greatest in history. For example, in images such as *Veduta dell'Arco*

di Tito, 1760 (Fig. 3) and *Veduta del Tempio della Sibilla in Tivoli,* 1761 (Fig. 4) he was able to convey an exaggerated sense of proportion beyond the physical reality of the structures through the strategic use of the axonometric 'worm's eye' perspective. [2]

[2] 'Worm's eye' perspective is a view that is seen from below. The eye is forced to look upward and consequently structures appear taller, towering over the viewer, whose scale appears proportionally reduced.

Figure 1

Giovanni Battista Piranesi
Veduta di Campo Vaccino, 1772
etching and engraving
45.5 x 54.5 cm
Collection: State Library of Victoria, Melbourne

Figure 2

Giovanni Battista Piranesi
Veduta di Campo Vaccino [Roman Forum with the Temple of Castor and Pollux to the right], 1772
etching and engraving
38 x 54.4 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Figure 3

Giovanni Battista Piranesi
Veduta dell'Arco di Tito, 1760
etching and engraving
40.3 x 62.4 cm
Collection: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 4

Giovanni Battista Piranesi
Veduta del Tempio della Sibilla in Tivoli, 1761
etching and engraving
40 x 60 cm
Collection: State Library of Victoria, Melbourne

The popularity of Piranesi's *Vedute di Roma* series provided the visual reference point which defined the ongoing legacy of the scenic ruin gazing tradition. It established the visual conventions that linked the previously disregarded fragmentary remains to the concepts of nostalgia, dreams of grandeur and fears of mortality, as well as pictorial conventions such as depth of field, foreshortening and perspective. This is reinforced by Andreas Huyssen's comment that:

> …the eighteenth century defined itself through the ruins of antiquity, but aimed at a totality of style and representation… Nostalgia is never very far when we talk about authenticity or romantic ruins (2011, pp. 20-24).

There was an imaginary aspect to this imagery, however, as Piranesi also embellished the psychological intensity within the drawing. He did this through the use of dramatic contrasts of light and shadow as well as manipulating the sense of scale to enhance the monumentality of the excavated ruins.

Horace Walpole enthused in *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1771):

> … the sublime dreams of Piranesi, who seems to have conceived visions of Rome beyond what it boasted even in the meridian of its splendour… He imagined scenes that would startle geometry, and exhaust the Indies to realise. He piles palaces on bridges, and temples on bridges, and temples on palaces and scales Heaven with mountains of edifices (1849, p. 398).

His depictions of classical Roman ruins embellished and redirected the scenic gaze, thus establishing the ruin as romantic, an aestheticised artefact of melancholic decay.

Since Piranesi, decay has been regarded as romantic, poetic and 'in a natural state of

becoming' (Simmel 1911, p. 259), resulting in ruins being depicted in harmonious and gentle relationships within landscape settings. The Romantic tradition added nostalgia and the portentous. Objects such as tombs and fragmented columns became compositional props. It is through such idealised, reflective and pleasurable aesthetic frameworks, linking decaying, fragmented architectural remains from classical antiquity to nostalgic and poetic yearning, dreams of grandeur and fears of mortality, that the conventions and enduring legacy of ruin gazing have been established.

Within the historical legacy of ruin gazing, there is also a tradition of 'poetic invention' (Dillon 2014, p. 6). This is epitomised by the landscape garden craze for 'follies', artificial ruins – especially tower and castle fantasies – which fed 'the imaginative power of arbitrary structures and accidental associations' (Dixon Hunt 1991, p. 179), and can still be seen in The Pineapple at Dunmore Park, Scotland, built circa 1777, and Sham Castle, near Bath, built in 1762. Such structures celebrated an impractical irrationality which tested credibility, even during the eighteenth century. They were also a physical manifestation of romantic sentiment towards the ruin, which reinforced the notion that ruins – whether natural or man-made – were a necessary visual and ideological component of picturesque sensibility. This is symbolised by the Temple of Ancient Virtue (Fig. 5), situated in the Elysian Fields at Stowe, commissioned by Lord Cobham in 1734. This representation of ruin as folly is encapsulated in Dillon's statement: '(s)urely a taste for ruins requires some degree of fantasy' (2014, p. 21).

Figure 5

The Temple of Ancient Virtue
Designed by William Kent, 1737
Stowe Landscape Gardens, Buckinghamshire, England, UK

3. Romanticism and Ruin Gazing

3.1 The Picturesque and William Gilpin (1724-1804)

The picturesque is a pictorial spatial formula closely associated with the Romantic art movement dating from 1800 until approximately 1850. 'Picturesque', meaning in the manner of a picture, fit to be made into a picture, was defined in Gilpin's *Essay on Prints,* 1768. Gilpin instilled ideas embodying gentility and connoisseurship through the appreciation of an uninterrupted scenic view often enhanced by the addition of a ruin within an attractive landscape setting. In his catalogue essay for the exhibition 'Ruin Lust: Artists' Fascination with Ruins from Turner to the Present Day', Dillon comments that the Romantic Ruin is made picturesque by its place in the landscape and the accommodation it seems to have reached with encroaching nature (2014, p. 27).

The picturesque landscape makes use of scenic framing formulae that guide the eye through the picture plane and therefore establish a perspective vanishing point outside the picture plane. Through the use of strategically placed natural and architectural objects within the image, the foreground, middle ground and background areas diminish the scale of the objects sequentially to create the appearance of objects receding, unimpeded, into the deep space of the landscape. This can also be combined with the aerial perspective use of atmospheric lighting effects reliant on the observation of clearly detailed and sharply focused objects in the foreground that recede and blur as they diminish in size.

Within this picturesque spatial formulation the view is never obscured by objects that compromise or fragment its stability, thereby allowing the viewer to be led smoothly and without disruption through the space to the far distance of the picture. The horizon

lines are often low, enabling a fully engulfing aerial and spiritually uplifting experience.

Within the scenically pleasurable picturesque model of pictorial space the viewer is taken comfortably through the picture to a vanishing point usually on the horizon line or just outside the picture plane. The eye is guided through a charming mountain vista and the unspoilt panorama to the vanishing point on the far right of the image using decaying architectural structures, usually castles, as middle ground props. The foreground is dominated by natural objects such as large trees or rocks (with emphasis on their roughness and irregularity) or the inclusion of small rustic figures and farm animals that are in keeping with the demands of the picturesque spatial formula, as for example in Gilpin's watercolour and graphite work *Landscape with a Lake and Ruins; a Tree in the Foreground, Mountains in the Distance,* 1772 (Fig. 6).

The attractive moodiness of the engulfing, atmospheric sweep within this watercolour and ink wash image is interdispersed with these tropes. The sketchy but tonally darker foreground is comprised of loose brushstrokes. This eases away through the middle ground to the airiness and light wash of the distant castle and through to the lake's intense light, before the far-distant aerial perspective of the last mountain range guides the eye out of the picture entirely.

Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, etc. relative chiefly to picturesque beauty: made in the summer of the year 1770*, 1782 was a patriotic and comprehensive guide book that popularised picturesque tourism, enabling travellers to recognise and enjoy scenic beauty in the irregularities of English medieval ruins, and to view distant landmarks and scenery framed by trees, along quiet riverbanks or lakeside settings. He prioritised morally uplifting, sweeping panoramic views through an idealised pictorial code which prioritised the rough and the misshapen over the smooth and curved. For Gilpin, landscape could be improved by the inclusion of the

irregular mountains, shaggy trees or ruined castles. Landscapes containing ‘roughness, irregularity and variousness’ were elevated and scenically pleasurable; possessing those qualities that he held to be ‘extremely romantic’ (Gilpin 1792, pp. 6-27).

Figure 6

William Gilpin
Landscape with a Lake and Ruins; a Tree in the Foreground, Mountains in the Distance, 1772
watercolour and graphite on paper
12.7 x 19.1 cm
Collection: British Museum, London

3.2 J.W.M. Turner (1775-1851)

The Romantic Ruin

Fragmentary remains abandoned in landscape settings being symbolically returned to nature carry complex and loaded representational significance in this period. They are scenic motifs and contemplative signifiers of the fallibility and transitory nature of human existence in the presence of the Divine. As writer and historian Christopher Woodward states:

> Here too the approach was that of the eighteenth century Picturesque, that is to say, a perspective that framed the experience of visiting but also involved a moral narrative, and a mediation on time, transience and humanity (2001, p. 223).

The historian Elizabeth Helsinger also states:

> By the late eighteenth century tours of Britain by the British were well established among the upper class, and increasingly, the middle classes. The sights… belonged to private estates; they included ruins and natural wonders… drawings and paintings of such sights... developed into a business in their own right (1994, p. 104).

During the mid-eighteenth century renewed interest in local English ruined church and castle sites encouraged poets such as William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) and Samuel Palmer (1805-1881) to make tours to the wilder and unexplored parts of the English countryside in search of artistic inspiration. Wordsworth's philosophies on nature and the divine were central to contemporary

English Romantic thinking.[3] The vaulted remains of Gothic Tintern Abbey in South Wales was one of the most popular sites during the Victorian Era, displaying picturesque views fit for nostalgic aestheticised elegiac displays of sorrow and longing. Wordsworth's poem *Tintern Abbey*, inspired Turner early in his career to paint the site many times. In keeping with fashionable picturesque views of the England and Wales, by the 1790s, ruined monasteries were as much the haunt of artists as antiquarians (Kennedy 2002, p. 1). *Tintern Abbey: The Chancel and Crossing, Looking toward the East Window*, 1794 (Fig. 7) demonstrates both a romantic sensibility and a picturesque pictorial spatial formula. Turner's image concentrated on a low vantage point to emphasise its unstable towering height and asymmetry, overgrown vegetation and decorative detail. Nostalgia is subtly conveyed by the deteriorating grandeur of the structure, enhanced by the ruins being covered in ivy – described by William Gilpin as the 'ornaments of time' (Dillon 2014, p. 18). The contemplative watercolour image painted in nuanced washes, from observation, in soft blues, greens and light umber, combined with the emanation of calm inner light, conjures a romantic mediation on mortality, decay and otherworldliness. Turner is using the ruin of Tintern Abbey as an instructive way to align with the established popular moral narratives of the time. The image is disconnected from the violent past that initially caused collapse of the Abbey during the Dissolution of the Monasteries 1536-1541[4] (Cadw 2019, p.1).

Turner could have made a fictional history painting that pictured its turbulent destruction, as he did later in his career with invented images of violent destruction such

[3] Wordsworth's poems, 'Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, 1798', 'Daffodils' and 'The Solitary Reaper', explore iconic romantic preoccupations, including the simple rustic life, where the human spirit is ennobled by wanderings through vast and awe-inspiring nature and contrasted with the lonely desolation of city life, thus providing creative inspiration for English Romantic painters.

[4] English King, Henry VIII disbanded monasteries and priories between 1536 and 1541 and appropriated their income and assets. The abandoned monastic ruins later became sites for picturesque artistic imagery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

as in the 1838 painting *Ancient Italy – Ovid Banished from Rome,* but the *Tintern Abbey* image is one of serenity and composure. Turner's emphasis is to convey a mournful quality within the image of the fallen Gothic architecture. It gently and fretfully portrays a melancholic message. The tiny scale of the figures in the mid ground section of the image, in relation to both the enduring stone fragments and the exaggerated soaring height of the Abbey, suggests human insignificance in life and in death when confronted by the presence of the divine, symbolised by the shafts of light in the interior section of the east window.

Figure 7

J.M.W. Turner
Tintern Abbey: The Chancel and Crossing, Looking toward the East Window, 1794
watercolour and graphite on paper
35.9 x 25 cm
Collection: Tate Britain, London

3.3 John Constable (1776-1837)

The Picturesque Ruin and The Scenic Ruin

These conventions of the picturesque are evident in John Constable's *Hadleigh Castle, The Mouth of the Thames – The Morning after a Stormy Night,* 1829 (Fig. 8). John Constable's initial pencil sketch drawing of *Hadleigh Castle* was made in 1814 and a subsequent oil painting was made in 1829 (Tate Britain, 2018). The artist and research fellow, Damian Taylor comments, 'Hadleigh Castle was painted in an age in which connections between earth and cloud were being drawn increasingly close, both in meteorology and in geology' and within 'the decade of English naturalism'. Thus engaging through direct observation with his local landscape area of East Anglia in South East England (p. 2).

The large (six foot) oil painting of *Hadleigh Castle, The Mouth of the Thames – The Morning after a Stormy Night,* 1829, represents a more dramatic and turbulent scene than usually depicted by Constable (Woodward 2001, p.106). It portrays the ruin of a decaying medieval English castle within a pastoral landscape setting which is uncharacteristically melancholic rather than bucolic. It demonstrates a darker and tenser evocation of the landscape's atmospherics, emphasising the drama of the post-storm sky, which is painted in short, energetic, staggered brushstrokes. It differs from the initial pencil sketch and the oil sketch, replacing a shepherd's flock with a dog and adding cows in the middle distance. The ruin is painted in uncharacteristic dark blackish brown. It clings on to the cliff face and the Thames estuary opens out to the east below low clouds, creating a distance that is blinded by theatrical shafts of gleaming sunlight. There is a sense of foreboding in the swirling clouds.

The motif of the ruin works as a key structural device, anchoring the composition and establishing a middle ground spatial dynamic within the expansive picturesque vista.

The figure/ground relationships within the composition are diminutive. The turbulence of the flock of buffeted birds within the middle ground contributes to Constable's exploration of a landscape that fits with more conventionally scenic picturesque formulae, but this is unconventional in its inclusion of the heroic subject of the castle ruin. The composition extends the horizontal focus to include the oncoming storm at the mouth of the Thames. The extreme turbulence and looseness of the painting style is, in my observation, also unconventional and sets the image apart from Constable's other more domestic, rural picturesque works such as *The Hay Wain,* 1821 (Fig. 9). There is the addition of a tree in the middle ground next to the ruin of the castle. Within the spatial picturesque compositional formula, a tree frames the ruin within the middle ground of the picture. This phase of his work culminated in his desire to appreciate nature by applying the mediation of composition, contrast, movement and painting directly and *en plein air*. The inclusion of the castle ruin is highly romantic and emotive in terms of its symbology in regard to Constable's landscapes, representing both a compositional painting trope and a connection to the established hubristic rise and fall narratives of the late Georgian period. As Woodward explains, '…travellers to the ruins of antiquity were not only contemplating past greatness but also considering the future of their own societies' (2001, p. 177).

Figure 8

John Constable
Hadleigh Castle, The Mouth of the Thames – The Morning after a Stormy Night, 1829
oil on linen
121.9 × 164.5 cm
Collection: National Gallery, London

Figure 9

John Constable
The Hay Wain, 1821
oil on linen
130.2 x 185.4 cm
Collection: National Gallery, London

3.4 Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840)

The ruin as the multifaceted signifier of complex and culturally specific meaning in relation to death and burial is apparent in the ruin imagination of the German Romantic artist, Caspar David Friedrich. It is used as a melancholic symbolic vehicle, a visual metaphor of transience and mortality and this is evidenced in his numerous depictions of the ruins of the Gothic Eldena Abbey, selected from his local landscape surroundings at Greifswald, in northern Germany. As Norbert Wolf states in his book, *Caspar David Friedrich: 1774-1840: the painter of stillness*:

> The ruins of the Cistercian monastery at Eldena appear regularly in the Friedrich's oeuvre and convey a religious symbolism and a message of transcience. At the same time the motif also expresses the painters deep attachment to his native region (2015, p. 22).

Friedrich's images lift the derelict and commonplace abbey ruins into a mysterious, psychological and spiritual experience of nature in combination with architectural decay. These works project upon the ruins a range of subjective emotional states and German Protestant beliefs, such as the intense intertwining of God and Nature, and the solitude and reflection of introspection that harked back to the medieval/Gothic period as a time of religious purity. As the artist and York University research scholar, Hannah Rice in her paper 'The Landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich and the Representation of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture' states:

> Friedrich uses Eldena Abbey as an example of a paradoxical bond between material and immaterial articulating the existentiality of the physical ruins as being a perpetual demonstration of a divine presence that is representative of the religious inner soul and German spirit (2012, p. 18).

The Ruins of Eldena Abbey, near Greifswald, c1825 (Fig. 10) and *Ruin of Eldena in the Giant Mountains,* 1830-1834 (Fig. 11) present Friedrich's fascination with the ruin as a complex representational device conveying loaded symbolic meaning through the atmospherics of changing landscape through light and shadow. The earlier version of the Gothic monastery of Eldena (Fig. 10) shows the ruin covered with resurgent vegetation in lush bright green and ethereal, divine yellow light. The later version (Fig. 11) interprets the subject in a more romantically, melancholic and symbolically heroic way. Friedrich's depiction of the ruin was a pessimistic and introspective response to nationalistic German ideals that intersected with his deep spiritualism. Simon Schama speaks of Friedrich's portrayal of ruined churches and altars in landscapes, stating, 'It is in fact its own altar and choir. And the anthem it sings is the concordance between nature and Gothic spirituality: a hymn of resurrection' (1996, p. 239).

As such, this then found subjective visual form through his depictions of nature. The picturesque spatial atmospherics of deep evening shadows and silhouetted monastic and castle ruins convey a more introspective and soulful response to ruins, again reinforcing the link with death and the lifecycles of man and nature characteristic of the Romantic Germanic symbology of ruin. Friedrich's symbolic response to such ruins, particularly the ruin of the Eldena Abbey (of which he painted many versions from 1800 to 1810) connect graveyard imagery with ruins, in an intentional way as the Gothic ruin was seen in Friedrich's time as a symbol for the transitory state of human nature, the futility of worldly pleasures and vanity as well as the certainty of death (Finke 1974, p. 25).

Friedrich placed the ruins in different contexts and surroundings to image his personal spiritual transition interpreted through the nostalgic metaphoric trope of a ruin in a landscape. The Cistercian abbey ruins of Eldena were a nostalgic, nationalistic

Figure 10

Caspar David Friedrich
The Ruins of Eldena Abbey, near Greifswald, c1825
oil on canvas
35 x 49 cm
Collection: Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin

Figure 11

Caspar David Friedrich
Ruin of Eldena in the Giant Mountains, 1830-1834
oil on canvas
101 x 72 cm
Collection: Pomeranian State Museum, Pomerania

monument that combined an idealised German past with a personal Christian devotion that reflected his deeply spiritual response to homeland. In his book *German painting: from Romanticism to Expressionism,* historian and writer Ulrich Finke states:

> The landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich (1774 – 1840) represent the clearest expression of north German Romanticism. Man and nature come together in a new and intimate relationship: the human figure and the Gothic ruins… take up the Baroque concept of the vanity of the world and endow it with enhanced significance' (1974, p. 22).

Caspar David Friedrich's portrayal of the complex attachment of symbology and meaning surrounding the ruin motif provides an ongoing and resilient legacy in regard to the romantic ruin. His works possess all the hallmarks of this tradition, such as the dramatic chiaroscuro and the deep silhouetting and theatrical back-lighting of the structures. Friedrich's specific linking of the ruin with church graveyard settings as reminders of human frailty, nostalgia and mortality continues and reinforces the scenic tradition of ruin depiction. For example, the scale of the ruins is drastically small in relation to the vastness and the blended ethereal colour of the sky that heightened the overall spiritual intentions of the image.

Friedrich's images provide a visual bridging from the romantic ruin to its contemporary manifestation, 'Ruin Porn'. In a twenty-first century context the photographing and documentation of urban ruin sites (dubbed Ruin Porn) uses similar historical tropes. Ruin Porn exploits a romantic nostalgia for decay, the sentimental and the portentous as well as referencing the enduring hubristic legacy of the rise and fall of great empires, as for example the previously mentioned instance of Detroit and the Chrysler Automotive corporate empire.

> Detroit, industrial capital of the XXth Century, played a fundamental role in shaping the modern world. The logic that created the city also destroyed it… Detroit presents all the archetypal buildings of an American city in a state of mummification. Its splendid decaying monuments are no less than the Pyramids of Egypt, the Coliseum of Rome or the Acropolis in Athens, remnants of the passing of a great Empire (Marchand & Meffre, 2005-10).

The photographers Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre offer a discussion to reinforce this point stating their choice of imagery is directly making such connections and this is outlined in full within the following analysis into ruin porn (Marchand & Meffre, 2005-10).

4. Ruin Porn

Whereas the predominant medium of the eighteenth century picturesque was painting, the medium of this contemporary ruin porn is photographic (Scarbrough 2016, p.1).

Ruin Porn is a recent, pop cultural, photographic 'Urban Explorer' movement.[5] This phenomenon has sparked a morbid curiosity for accessing inner city, domestic dilapidation or the infrastructural decay of post-industrial particularly, American buildings such as the Chrysler Motor Company city of Detroit.

Ruin porn is of interest to this research as its focus lies in the contemporary obsession with photographing rotting and decaying buildings of a particular type, most notably the romantic 'icons of a once golden era' (p. 10). Images such as the Beaux Arts train station are more prevalent than images of decaying, shoddily made, mid-century, single-family homes' (p. 10). It is the fallen grandeur of the decrepit buildings that is crucial to the research's positioning of this photographic genre as a contemporary iteration of eighteenth century the romantic and picturesque aesthetic framings of ruins as nostalgic, hubristic and the portentous. The imagery of ruin porn, in my observation, deliberately provokes pathos by picturing once-majestic theatres, music halls, luxurious hotels and the decaying factory ruins of industrial empires, an example of this is imposing industrial ruin of Chrysler Building and car factory. Christopher Woodward in, *In Ruins*, calls such popular connections to the fall of great empires 'the Ozymandias

[5] The 'Urban Explorer' movement is a hobby activity involving the exploration of abandoned man-made ruins within urban centres. It involves photographic documentation and is linked to the art movement of Ruin Porn.

complex' (p. 177)[6].

Technically there are distinct voyeuristic similarities across the photographic imaging of these sites (hence the moniker, 'ruin porn' Scarbrough 2016, p. 1). The pictorial conventions of stylised cropping, flood lighting, wide-angle shots that standardise distance in order to create cathedral-like spaces, the heightened, sometimes lurid colour, as for example, the Photoshop enhancement of the *Fisher Body Plant* 21, 2007, by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre and an absence of both human and animal life within these gutted buildings (Fig. 12).

Its portrayal of present-day abandoned industrial factories, entertainment venues, decaying shopping complexes and amusement parks, continues to invest the familiar themes of vulnerability and mortality associated with the romantic ruin. Typically these refer to the rise and fall of corporate or national empires or the breakdown of civil society. Such ruins are depicted with a morbid but also titillating fascination for portent and folly and their downfall and monumental decay is sensationally linked with the remnants of other past empires such as the Colosseum in Rome or the Pyramids in Egypt. Ruin Porn, therefore, presents a contemporary iteration of nostalgic yearning for past glories within the context of present-day urban ruin.

The image by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, *Ballroom, Lee Plaza Hotel, Detroit*, 2006 (Fig. 13), illustrates the rise and fall of empire thematic. The image revisits romantic aesthetics, emphasising theatrical stage flood lighting, saturated golden colour, detailed close-ups, wide-angle long shots and digital enhancement to portray the

[6] In the book *In Ruins,* Woodward titles Chapter 9 'The Ozymandias Complex'. He is referring to the sonnet 'Ozymandias' written in 1818 by English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Ozymadias is the Greek name for the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II, reputed as one of Egypt's most powerful and longest living Pharaohs. The gigantic head and torso fragment of the statue was unveiled in the British Museum prompting Shelley to write a poetic refection upon the fate of such powerful rulers across time and the impermanence of their legacies as their empires decline and fall into oblivion.

pathetic nature of ruins through emotionally manipulative spectacles of ruinous collapse, sensationalism, voyeurism and the thrill of taboo. There are no people in the photograph and this adds to the voyeurism. It is characteristic of the theatricality surrounding the romantic emotional ploys of nostalgia, pathos, loss, hubris and morbid curiosity, and in keeping with the tropes of the tradition of ruin lust.

Despite the upturned and broken piano and chairs appearing in the foreground of the image the space within the room is so considerable that the viewer is completely distanced from the detail of the squalid material reality of the decay characteristic of such sites. This is akin to the phenomenon of 'slum tourism'[7] as it enables voyeuristic 'wealthy middle class to feel inspired, uplifted and enriched' through fetishised representations of the physical or social realities if catastrophic neglect (Nisbett 2017, p. 37). Such emotionally manipulative ploys operate self-centredly and in gratuitous ways reminiscent of the sentimentality that characterises the eighteenth-century romantic ruin lust portrayal of obsessive pleasurable beauty to be found in melancholic decay, desolation and collapse.

[7] Slum tourism is a highly organised and widely marketed phenomenon (Nisbett 2017, p. 5) involving the touring at a considerable distance the poverty found in urban slum sites. It is most usually restricted to third world countries in Asia. However, Detroit in the United States also provides an example. It was also a popular pastime in Victorian England featuring in the novels of Charles Dickens. There is considerable academic conjecture as to whether it is a voyeuristic, intrusive and moralistic practice (2017, p. 37).

Figure 12

Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre
Fisher Body Plant 21, *Detroit*, 2008
tirage ultrachrome, 150 x 190 cm
Collection: Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre

Figure 13

Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre
Ballroom, Lee Plaza Hotel, Detroit, 2006
colour photograph
size unavailable
Collection: Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre

5. Conclusion

The research within this chapter has provided an outline and evidence that the form of the ruin is an enduring and alluring representational trope. Scholarly and popular interest and debate that surrounds both ruins from the distant past as well as from more recent times continues to intensify. All ruins are represented, understood or judged against the ongoing persistence the scenic ruin and '…the way we see them is not raw but framed by a long tradition of ruin gazing' (Hell and Schönle 2010, p. 1). This entrenched tradition of depiction of ruinous architectural remains in landscape settings originated from the Picturesque or Romantic art movements that flourished during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Embedded in these Romantic and Picturesque scenic ruin traditions are enduring themes of portentous lessons, such as the rise and fall of great civilisations, human mortality and melancholic collapse coupled with the transitory nature of human life and the eternal presence of God. In this way, the fascination with ruins that are distant in time (such as Classical ruins) acts as an idealised visual metaphor for refuge from the realities of a real and unpleasant world.

This research contends that the chronological distance in time from the initial causal event gives rise to feelings of nostalgia, sentimentality, and yearning that connect more specifically to ruins from the distant past and may be inappropriate in dealing with the contemporary visual experience of present-day ruins. The scenic ruin, with its poetic and nostalgic connotations, needs a considerable amount of time to elapse in order to erase the memory of its violent destruction. This suggests that dealing with ruins which have occurred as a result of recent events requires a different approach – one that eschews nostalgia and sentimentalisation.

This chapter has examined artists Giovanni Battista Piranesi, William Gilpin, J.M.W. Turner, John Constable, Caspar David Friedrich, and Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre. The disparity of expectation in response to ruins from this historical tradition and the unscenic actuality of the contemporary experience is explored in Chapter Two, which deals in detail with the anxiety of unscenic ruins in the works of Anselm Kiefer, Joel Meyerowitz and Ed Ruscha's reworking of Thomas D. Cole's *Course of Empire* series.

Chapter Two

The Unscenic Ruin

1. An Introduction to the Unscenic Ruin

The nostalgic gaze, the romanticised meanings and picturesque spatial framings of ruins and the persistence of understandings of ruin have been the subject of the previous discussion. Within this chapter, the discussion centres on categories of ruin that are visually and spatially at odds with the scenic and nostalgic traditions, and also conceptually disconnected from ruins framed as cult objects or detached symbols of pleasurable reflection. This chapter explores an unscenic gaze and defines the prosaic ruin.

The material realities of decay and dilapidation may be visually unremarkable and prosaic, provoking negative emotions that range from anxiety to indifference and detachment about instability and ruinous neglect. Catastrophic destruction or collapse is visually confronting, provoking trauma, hostility, a sense of loss, or failure. These contrasting aspects of the unscenic are neither charismatic nor morally uplifting. Both resist glamorisation, sentimentality and nostalgia. Such characteristics are desirable attributes within historical Romantic and Picturesque traditions as well as Ruin Porn, but confronting the physical reality of an unscenic ruin site provokes an entirely different visual and conceptual response. The pleasure of reflection or nostalgia is denied when grappling with the actual physicality of the ruin event,[8] as a site and as an experience within recent memory.

[8] Catastrophic ruin events, either man-made or naturally occurring (such as war or terrorist attacks, natural disasters such as earthquakes, mud slides or volcanic eruptions and bush fires, floods, tsunamis and tornedos) evoke immediate emotional responses like terror and trauma in regard to self, family and community safety, and the preservation of life. The representation of ruin in a catastrophic context resists the reflective and contemplative, as a distance of time is required to process the scale of devastation and loss, perhaps requiring generational separation. Memorialising and recognising of acts of heroism and the resilience of the human spirit are the initial responses and are most often represented through photojournalism or a survivor's phone footage and in response to the real-time moment.

In contrast to traditional romantic frameworks, the discussion undertaken in this chapter focuses on artists who deal with the immediacy and uncomfortable material reality of present-day neglected, disintegrating or devastated architectural remains and artefacts that lie outside the fantasy or imaginary of ruins within scenic traditions.

It proposes that the scenic and Romantic tradition is unsuited to deal adequately or appropriately with the immediacy, devastation and range of compromised visual experience involved in catastrophic ruins created by recent traumatic events or the dilapidation of urban neglect. Insufficient distance in time has elapsed to block the immediate visceral or emotional reaction and allow for a comforting arm's length assessment or reflection involving nostalgia and aestheticisation. Only sufficient temporal distance (and this can take generations) allows ruins to be represented pleasurably and placed as an 'exalted position of contemplation or even worship' (Roth 1997, p. 1).

The types of ruin discussed within this chapter cause reactions like trauma, anxiety and disquiet, as well as detachment and indifference, rather than the type of nostalgic speculation and evocative possibilities of ruin typified by definitions that claim 'the triumph of strength over nature, a melancholic but not unpleasant thought' (Kames 1794, p. 173). These varying responses to the ruin are analysed in relation to artworks by Anselm Kiefer, David Meyerowitz, Ed Ruscha and Merilyn Fairskye. The depictions of ruin discussed within this chapter are those existing in recent memory (including the post-World War II, post-9/11 and the post-Global Financial Crisis experience of ruins), all of which emphasise the loss or failure of economic, political and social ideals.

2. The Anxious Ruin

2.1 Anselm Kiefer (b. 1945)

Post-war, German Neo-Expressionist artist, Anselm Kiefer's works have always explored big themes in relation to man-made catastrophic architectural ruin, decay and collapse as motifs to examine the impact of the German legacy of World War II. Simon Schama explains,

> At the core of this strategy of embarrassment was an obstinate determination to force together culturally acceptable elements of the German heroic and mythic tradition with its unacceptable historical consequences (1995, p. 123).

His focus is the rebuilding of the national psyche and German identity after the catastrophic events of the Holocaust by expressively confronting such uncomfortable and deeply distressing subjects as the racial and ethnic cleansing of the European Jews, the extermination of the Romani gypsies, and the persecution of other groups stigmatised as degenerate such as artists, Communists, the old, the disabled or the mentally infirm, in order to create a racially pure and physically elite Aryan race (Day 2016, p. 1).[9] The art writer Rickovia Leung states:

> Kiefer's fascination is with the Germanic heroes who are part of the national identity. It (a sword) is also stained with blood, simultaneously becoming a witness of the past history of the past century (2016, p. 1).

[9] Kiefer is determined to challenge post-war taboo subjects and cathartically scrutinise the impact of the psychological legacy of Nazi Germany by using direct and uncomfortable text, slogans and iconic Third Reich ruins to highlight the atrocities of the Holocaust as a central part of a national cultural discussion.

Pictorially he uses the trope of the archetypal, man-made, catastrophic architectural ruin to achieve this goal. His works attempt to deal with ruins as persistent reminders of unforgettable devastation (2016, p. 1). Kiefer's dramatic paintings reflect the significance of such catastrophic ruins as a way to think through the relevance of the past within the present cultural context. This culminates in works such as *Interior*, 1981 (Fig. 14) and *Aschenblume*, 1983-1997 (Fig. 15), which combine painted, textural and sculptural elements that effectively present monumental, cinematic scale, theatrical space, and emotive colour with unexpected combinations of salvaged objects and symbolically loaded materials such as lead, straw, mud or sand into spectacles that ironically rival the ambition and spectacle of Hitler's imperial fantasies. He links German Romanticism, history and cultural heritage with Hitler's megalomaniacal fantasies to explore themes of guilt, loss, national identity and memory through the taboo narratives surrounding dramatic German historical events, such as the Soviet bombing of Albert Speer's Chancellery building in Berlin or the building of the Zeppelin Field in Nuremburg. He contrasts the persistence of physicality in the form of massive, cavernous built structures with the temporality of human existence.

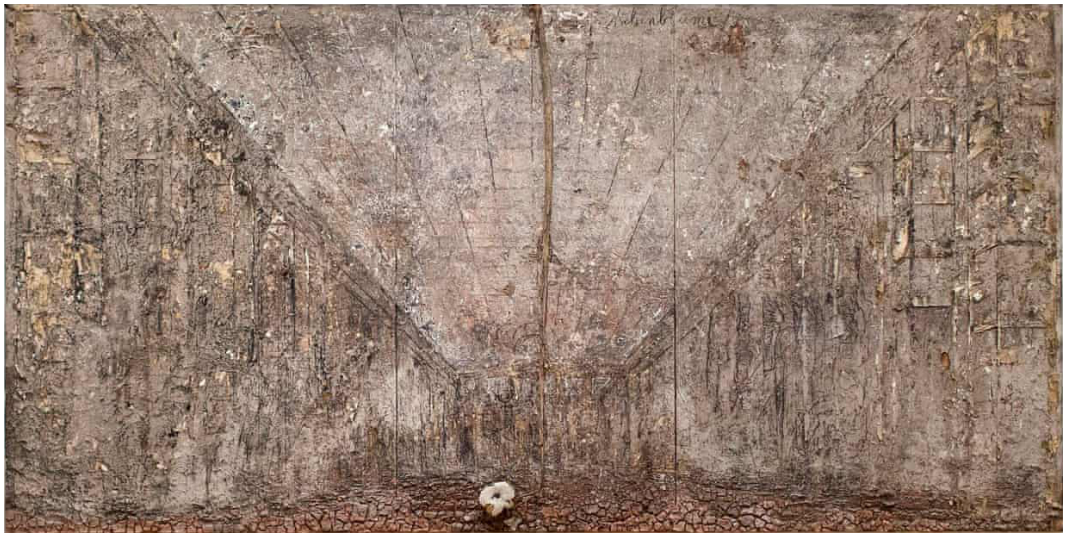
Kiefer, in the painting, *Interior,* 1981 employs pictorial inventions that reference the remains of architecturally pompous Third Reich constructions (such as the Mosaic Hall of the New Reich Chancellery) designed by Speer for Hitler's planned rebuilding of Berlin as the capital city of the new Germania.

Kiefer examines the appropriation of architecture and its relationship to propaganda, grandiose ambition and ideological failure, '…his ideas are informed by, amongst other subjects, the Holocaust, Egyptian mythology, the architecture of Albert Speer, German Romanticism and the poems of Paul Celan' (Cooke 2014, p. 1). Works such as this one are confrontational, sublimely awe-inspiring, and attempt to find a way for cathartic

Figure 14

Anselm Kiefer
Interior, 1981
oil, acrylic, and paper on canvas
287.5 x 311 cm
Collection: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Figure 15



Anselm Kiefer
Aschenblume, 1983-97
oil, emulsion, acrylic paint, clay, ash, earth, and dried sunflower on canvas
380 x 760 cm
Collection: Museum of Fort Worth, Texas

regeneration through a pictorial engagement with the tainted ruinous remains of the historic monuments of the Third Reich.

A key visual strategy in his examination of destruction is evident in his method of combining and transforming physically unstable salvaged materials or symbolic objects into epic vanitas dramas that provide a reference to physical and mental anxiety, uncertainty and mortality. This is exemplified by the large-scale painting, *Eisen-Steig*, 1986 (Fig. 16).

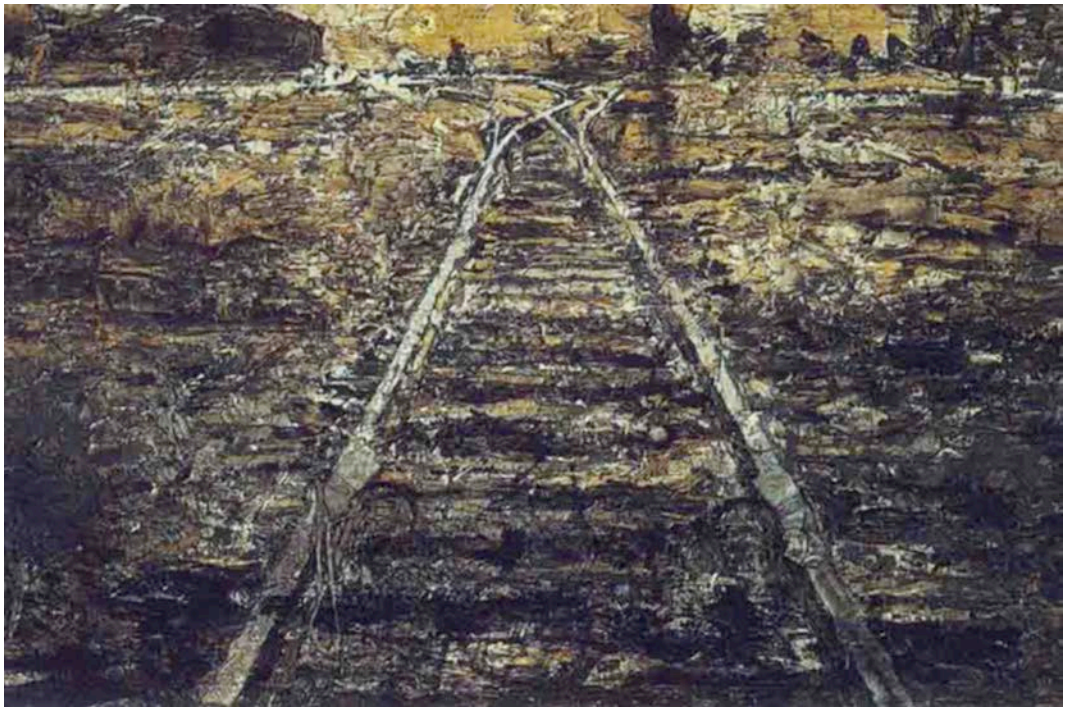
The choice of these unstable and potentially self-destructing materials, contrasted with the durable metal objects, is almost the subject of the image itself. However, each material is symbolically intrinsic for Kiefer's signalling of the pathos and fragility of life as he unfolds the story of the Holocaust victims' tragic journey and excavates it from the density of each layer of textural debris that 'demonstrate a fondness for metaphors, something that makes itself felt in the geological crusts of his paintings' (Searle 2005, p. 1). Within this massive scale artwork Kiefer provides a way to 'acknowledge both the human and the historical scale of past events and their place in our larger models of the world' (2005, p. 1).

Tempelhof, 2010-11 (Fig. 17) is a 17-metre long painting, resembling a stage set which is part of a series of large-scale works dealing with the vast decaying shell of the Tempelhof Airport complex. Designed by Albert Speer and constructed by the Nazi regime, it was intended to link massive architectural scale with Third Reich propaganda in order to inspire awe domestically and instil fear internationally.[10]

Tempelhof is one of a series of cavernous interior images that Kiefer created over a span of thirty years. Each image represents a historically dense and iconic Third Reich

[10] Tempelhof was constructed as the airport for Hitler's city of Germania and, in keeping with his imperialist architectural ideals, was of the largest buildings ever constructed. It was bombed and razed by the Soviets in the Battle of Berlin in1945 but rebuilt in the post-war era and functioned as a freight airport until 2007.

Figure 16



Anselm Kiefer
Eisen-Steig, 1986
oil, acrylic, olive branches, ash, lead, iron, gold leaf and emulsion on canvas
220 x 380 x 27.9 cm
collection unavailable

Figure 17

Anselm Kiefer
Tempelhof, 2010-11
oil, acrylic, terracotta and salt on canvas
380 x 760 cm
collection unavailable

interior as a decaying and inglorious ruin. Kiefer created the painted image from historical photographs, and his choice of the destruction of this monumental structure to illustrate Hitler's hubristic and grandiose failure was deliberate and calculated. Academic Christian Weikop underlines the importance to Kiefer of this type of reference material, stating: 'Keifer seems to use photographs almost like Wagnerian leitmotifs in a process of recurrence and recontextualisation, which often leads to new interpretations' (2016 p. 6).

Visually, a vast derelict room recedes to a vanishing point in the far distance of the cavernous hall. This sets up a scale dynamic between the overwhelming colossal disintegration occurring within the interior and the scale of the absent viewer. The enormity of the egotistical grandeur of the space dwarfs the absent viewer into ineffectual incapacity, and reinforces the awareness that this is no ordinary interior space as it conveys a sense of redundant self-aggrandisement. The scale of the artwork alludes to the big historical themes that underpin Kiefer's imagery, such as the failure of Nazi cultural ideologies and romantic themes of folly and loss of spiritual confidence. 'He has never turned away from the difficult and sombre… a reproach to those who think art can't deal with the big subjects, with history, memory and genocide' (Cooke 2014 p. 1). A peculiar cloud of green copper oxide paint, like a mist, drifts upwards to the ceiling space, at a safe distance, as if the drama were unfolding on a stage set in front of the viewer. This distance is not remote but it is sufficient to establish an awareness of the magnitude of this decaying historical structure and that this must signify something symbolically significant. Despite the obfuscation caused by the cloud, the dirt encrusted windows and the sense of theatrical illusory space, there is a strong sense of experiencing the spectacle of structural and psychological collapse. The instability of the encrusted physical materials contributes to the spectacle of

disintegration and flux as any illusion of permanent monumentality disintegrates.

It also sets up the emotional dynamic of pathos that is channelled through the use of the cold blue light, the sickly ash-like colour of decay, and the addition of salt to the constructed surface. His choice of symbolic natural materials is emotionally loaded and never random. *Tempelhof* is both compulsive and repulsive, but the image in my observation, resists the deep emotional response of grief because its manipulated theatrically acts as a barrier to a truly gut-wrenching experience.

3. The Catastrophic Ruin

3.1 Joel Meyerowitz (b. 1938)

The Joel Meyerowitz photographic archive, *Aftermath*, 2001, demonstrates an analogue visual record attempting to convey a response to real-time catastrophic ruin and trauma with solemnity and heroism while also incorporating the visual stories of the emergency workers and their daily clean-up routines during the eight months after the collapse of the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. As the official record of this traumatic event, his works acknowledge and dignify in the enormity of the clean-up process through his attention to the detail and scope of their selfless bravery, sensitivity, humanity, determination and camaraderie. This is achieved by contrasting the living presence and human scale of individuals and teams of workers against the backdrop of the catastrophic ruin. Meyerowitz details their ant-like work routine, without facemask protection, within the expanse of rubble and fume clouds, while also conveying their range of emotional responses through close-up portrait photos. This cathartic body of photography surrounding the documentation of the Ground Zero site provides an encompassing insight into the contemporary experience of catastrophic ruin, particularly in regard to the experience and effect that such a cataclysmic event as the destruction of the Twin Towers provokes in understanding the role of anxiety and trauma in the contemporary urban experience. It is the shock, the sense of violation and the incomprehensibility of the scale of the destruction, even at range, that Meyerowitz puts at the centre of the experience of this catastrophe such as this.

The World Trade Center symbolised the commercial heart of the densely populated American metropolis and the attack created a surreal spectacle and sense of disbelief.

To process such psychological turmoil, even within the recent past, a distance of time is required to dull the immediate, raw emotion and to decide on the moral and ethical questions or establish memorialising narratives that accompany traumatic events. As the author of 'The Pleasure of Ruins', Rose Macaulay puts it: '(n)ew ruins have not yet acquired the weathered patina of age… new ruins are for a time stark and bare, vegetationless and creatureless; blackened and torn, they smell of fire and mortality' (1953, p. 453). Physical distance is also required to enforce safety and creates the need for barriers to enforce exclusion zones.

Meyerowitz explains his initial response to the events of 9/11 as one that can often lead to a feeling of ineffectuality and paralysis. Yet, he was also overwhelmed by the human urge to participate and to assist (Meyerowitz 2001). The immediacy and overwhelming scale of the event overshadows all rationality. In the catastrophic event the ruin is not a beautiful or innocent object, as catastrophic ruins are caught in the real-time violence that created them. The focus on material remains was not Meyerowitz's priority; the shock of the events was so emotionally overwhelming. The ruinous objects that were uncovered were grim reminders or trophies. The pulverised physicality of the on-site devastation could offer up material only suitable for landfill (Meyerowitz 2001). For him, the choice of still photography rather than the moving image of film or video reinforces the emotional response of shock and the subsequent paralysis of response that is caused by trauma. Insufficient time has passed for the objects to take on the beauty of picturesque decay. Time and weather have not aestheticised their fragmentation as typified by the Romantic or picturesque tradition. The rubble is not deliberately placed. It is strewn in a mish-mash of chaotic destruction, reflecting the force and upheaval that caused it.

The photographic image, *Assembled Panorama of the Plaza, Looking South and West,*

2001 (Fig. 18) in the *Aftermath* series, provides an official record of the visually and emotionally overwhelming catastrophic destruction at the Ground Zero site. The image reinforces my contention that real-time catastrophic ruins cannot be absorbed into the narrative and imaginary traditions of romantic or scenic ruins: they are both inappropriate and inadequate to deal with the material and corporeal experience of ruin as a contemporary event.

The imaging of this scale of destruction is visually and psychologically incomprehensible and illogical – anything can land anywhere. The chaos and overall sense of the scale of the devastation is captured within the assembled panoramic format. The eye-level perspective locates the viewer at ground level and in close proximity to the obliterated buildings around the site, thus actively inviting the viewer to witness the destruction. This image, unlike many of the others in the series, has no people. It is hard to make sense of the destruction or to remember the towers before the attack as the sense of scale of the crater and the pulverised remains of the 110-storey steel and glass skyscrapers (including the plumbing, the wiring and the concrete flooring) is beyond comprehension.

The conferring of ruin status, meaning or context on remnant physical remains within an organised and managed site is a process that requires a shared sense of community and systematic planning. Such sites are cleared away as quickly as possible in order that the site can be reconstructed and memorialised in the future. Reflection and analysis are also processes that require a period of time to establish the meaning or to get any contextual perspective on the events and to recover from trauma.

Photographs like Meyerowitz's documentary works convey the magnitude of the catastrophic destruction within an urban environment, as well as recording the rescue attempts, the recovery, the demolition of the ruins, the daily routines of the on-site

Figure 18

Joel Meyerowitz
Assembled Panorama of the Plaza, Looking South and West, 2001
colour photograph
size unavailable
Collection: City of New York

workers, and the details of the excavation process as tens of thousands of tonnes of debris are cleared and removed from the site in order to level the ground and transform the site. Photographs such as *Rescue Workers on the Plaza*, 2001 (Fig. 19) also chronicle the restoration process by documenting the clearing of all debris and soil down to the bedrock, the levelling and the spiritual reclamation of the site after the catastrophic loss of life and destruction of property.

The paintings of Anselm Kiefer and the photographic series *Aftermath* by Joel Meyerowitz are emotionally powerful works that make visually evident both the traumatic devastation of real-time catastrophic ruin and its internalised and repressive emotional consequences in the longer term. Their works achieve these aims through the convergence of the confrontational toughness of the imagery and their refusal to bend to the denialist mentality that surrounds the imaging of trauma and catastrophic ruin.

As examples that typify urban neglect, the mundane or prosaic ruin provokes a similar in-denial, adverse reaction within the wider public audience. However, these dilapidated, peripherally located ruin sites prompt different reactions that range from anxiety to ambivalence or to a sense of detachment rather than the trauma that is characteristic of the catastrophic ruin.

Such reactions are explored in the following section within the works of Robert Smithson, Thomas D. Cole, Ed Ruscha, Merilyn Fairskye and the research project's Myer site case study.

Figure 19

Joel Meyerowitz
Rescue Workers on the Plaza, 2001
colour photograph
size unavailable
Collection: City of New York

4. The Mundane Prosaic Ruin

These ‘scenically challenged parts of nature’ (Saito 1998, p. 102) are the types of uncharismatic and unstructured sites whose ruin status is difficult to aestheticise. They often exist in unremarkable, marginalised, neglected spaces considered unproductive and unsightly. Consequently, they are ignored or hidden from view. Consisting of mundane rubble or banal shabbiness, they present innocuous and unremarkable qualities, raising anxiety and disquiet surrounding their dysfunction and absence of productive potential. They are particularly confrontational within the commercial landscape.

Fundamental to the assessment of the representation of aesthetically marginalised, unscenic and neglected ruins is the theoretical exploration of unscenic nature presented by Yuriko Saito in her article, ‘The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature’. She argues that, ‘(a) revolution in the aesthetics of nature takes place when people start appreciating the parts of nature formerly regarded as aesthetically negative’ (1998, p. 100). As such, she advocates for the aesthetic recognition of ‘any environment devoid of effective pictorial composition, excitement or amusement (that is not worthy of being represented in a picture)’ (p. 100). Saito contends that ‘the picturesque emphasis on vision as the vehicle for appreciating the natural environment’ is one that ‘has led us to regard nature as a series of scenes consisting of two dimensional designs’ (p. 100). The visual recognition of compositionally featureless, degraded or organically unpleasant qualities in the landscape forces the aesthetic reassessment of ruinous sites across the natural and the urban environment. Her focus is to be inclusive of their aesthetic challenges as these may offer unforseen visual observational opportunities or challenges that require alternative visual strategies that resist the purely visual spatial frameworks of the picturesque.

In arguing for a more sensitive and holistic approach based upon ecosystem sustainability within the landscape, she emphasises ‘a subtle, less aggressive beauty outside the grand or spectacular showpieces of easy beauty’ left by the picturesque aesthetics of the eighteenth century (p. 101).

The shift of focus from pictorial approaches that solely define landscape as a view or a panorama to one that is inclusive of spaces with unscenic qualities is reinforced by the writer and ethicist Holmes Rolston’s view that while ‘we search for something pretty or colourful, for scenic beauty, for the picturesque… when [landscapes] do not [provide this], we must not think that they have no aesthetic qualities’ (1998, p. 342).

The case for a visually all-inclusive approach to re-assess the unscenic qualities of marginalised spaces has also been explored within the concept of *terrain vague.* This typically refers to visually featureless, vacant and degraded spaces that are often found on the periphery of urban centres. The urban theorist and architect Ignasi de Solà-Morales coined the term *terrain vague* to define urban fringe or hinterland spaces (such as abandoned lots, areas under bridges or waste dumps) and analyses their lack of organised and productive purpose within the urban landscape. Descriptively, they are flat and uneventful, with weeds and litter submerging layers of asphalt, rubbish or broken cement. Spatially, they defy picturesque figure/ground relationships because the visual uneventfulness is continuous, colourless and devoid of the aesthetic props that characterise scenic representations of landscape. Solà-Morales concludes that such spaces pose a conceptual and visual challenge to logical and cohesive urban planning regimes because their functional status is inexact and imprecise. His theoretical emphasis is upon forms of absence in contemporary cities and he values their ruinous qualities as spaces of speculative and architectural possibility (1995, pp. 119-122).

4.1 Robert Smithson (1938-1973)

American Robert Smithson was one of the first artists to address such sites, referring to them as *non-sites*. His practice actively sought out and incorporated unscenic locations into his earthworks projects (Figs. 20 & 21), encompassing the totality of the unscenic experience in positive terms, assessing that 'the site remained wrapped in blandness' (Smithson 1967, p. 73). His use of maps, diagrams, photography and drawing respected the sites' 'innocuous and ruinous qualities'. Smithson's investigation of prosaic sites and their subsequent reassessment as new monuments is outlined within his 1967 essay, *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey,* in which he describes such sites as an 'anti-romantic mise-en-scene… without a rational past and without the "big events" of history' (p. 72). He continued this theme in *A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites,* 1968. Both writings outline the return to the forgotten industrial sites of his upbringing in the city of Passaic. Discussing his work, *Non-Site-Pine Barrens New Jersey*, 1968, Smithson stated:

> It began in a very primitive way …I started taking trips in 1965: certain sites would appeal to me more – sites that in some way had been disrupted… pulverised… I was really looking for a denaturalisation rather than a scenic beauty. (Flam 1996, p. 244)

A distinctive feature of prosaic ruins is that they crumble and weather, rather than decaying artistically. Such semantic nuances are important for the conferral of ruin status as they contribute to the distinctions between scenic ruins and those sitting outside those traditions. Ironically, prosaic, mundane, weed-covered ruins do demonstrate evidence of the resurgence of nature, but not the sentimentalised symbology of ivy which characterises the portrayal of romantic, aestheticised ruins.

Figure 20

Robert Smithson
The Great Pipe Monument, 1967
black and white photograph
size unavailable
Collection: National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway

Figure 21

Robert Smithson
The Great Fountain Monument, 1967
black and white photograph
size unavailable
Collection: National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway

At the height of Modernism, an optimistic belief in the ideals of progress would have meant that unscenic ruins were quickly superseded or revitalised, not left to slowly disintegrate. The progressive social and political ideals of Modernist art and architecture are called into question by the existence and experience of ruins in the late twentieth century through to the present. The ruins of failed industries and commercial ventures (such as shopping malls, holiday resorts or socially engineered housing projects) represent rapid change; for example, as a pejorative concept involving the dispossession of people and instability in an uncertain world that for many is out of control.

'A word close to ruin is derelict; yet the two terms prompt opposite reactions – a ruin inspiring poetry and the other calling for demolition' (Williams 2010, p. 1). This quote illustrates divergent and ambiguous interpretations of historical ruins as objects of connoisseurship, scholarship and reflection when contrasted against ruins from the recent past that are characterised by desuetude and dereliction. Ruin and rubble provoke different responses within broader discussions surrounding ruins as a concept and the contemporary imaginary of ruins. The aestheticised ruin is most probably made of venerable material like stone. Conversely, ruins that are made of contemporary materials such as concrete, steel, and glass are considered less preservation worthy in their 'ruin value'.[11] Third Reich architect Albert Speer wanted inspirational 'materials that would last, and more importantly, go to ruin as clearly recognisable ruins, not rubble (Hell 2010, p. 187; Speer 1969, p. 56).

Collectively, these contemporary ruins cause anxiety and dismay as their incremental disintegration resists aestheticisation. They present as both unscenic and obsolete: their

[11] Albert Speer coined the phrase 'ruin value'. His aesthetic preference was for the venerable building materials of Imperial Rome, such as stone or marble and he resisted contemporary construction materials such as iron or steel, believing that in the advent of collapse the former would result in more aesthetically pleasing ruins.

dysfunctional condition is often concealed from view and will most likely be demolished as they undermine notions of economic prosperity and progress associated with Modernity. Examples of such ruins include: remnant residential housing tower blocks, such as the Pruitt-Igoe in St Louis demolished in 1972; vacant, boarded-up shops or terraces; Cold War architectural eccentricities; deserted holiday resorts and shopping centres or apartment blocks such as Le Corbusier's utopian *Villa Savoye* outside Paris, which fell apart as a result of experimental building techniques, forcing the tenants to leave.

The sense of anxiety inherent in the contemporary boom or bust experience is the outcome of a collapse of belief in progressive ideals and the achievements of the Western industrialised world of late capitalism, post-Fordism as well as a loss of faith in imagining a better or ecologically stable world. The contemporary imaginary of ruins and ruination is characterised by unsentimental discussions and frameworks that anticipate disillusionment, the dystopian and the apocalyptic, rather than romantic or nostalgic yearning. The next section turns to the images of artists Ed Ruscha and Merilyn Fairskye, which provide examples of such contemporary framings of unscenic ruin.

5. The Real Estate Ruin

Let us skip ahead a century to the Whitney Museum's The Course of Empire. This exhibit also conjured up images of barbarous decadent Carthage, but with a difference: Ruscha took the exhibit's title from Cole, who painted his Course of Empire series in the 1830's Ruscha's paintings confront the viewer' with a sight often seen but rarely made the subject of a work of art: industrial modernity in decay; Cole's work thematises the rise and fall of empires (Hell 2010, p. 175).

5.1 Thomas D. Cole (1801-1848), Ed Ruscha (b. 1937) and Merilyn Fairskye (b. 1950)

The series of paintings *The Course of Empire, 2005* by Ed Ruscha, (Figs. 27-32) and the series of photographs *Plant Life* by Merilyn Fairskye (Fig. 34) are discussed as excellent examples of the unremarkable normality that characterises the contemporary representation of prosaic urban real estate ruin. Both visualise disintegration and abandonment as innocuously routine. The nineteenth century artist Thomas D. Cole's original 1833-36 painting series *The Course of Empire* (Figs. 22-26) is discussed in relation to Ed Ruscha's contemporary reworking of this series.

This discussion provides an introduction into anxiety and real estate ruin that is outlined in detail in depth descriptive analysis of these artist's works.

In Thomas D. Cole's grand historical visualisation of the sequential rise and fall of a noble civilisation, a virtuous and prosperous, populous city, built on hard work that has risen from a savage and subsequently Arcadian state implodes by virtue of its own hubris and decadence to become a catastrophic rubble ruinscape.

Ed Ruscha's reworking of Cole's emblematic series avoids the moralistic implications of his predecessor but effectively conveys an anxiety about real estate wastelands by portraying the monotony of barren real estate, emptied of people, that the writer James Ellroy describes as 'geography as psychology' (Ellroy 2009, p. 1).

The absence of people, typical of all Ed Ruscha's imagery increases the unease and the blandness of this inhospitable industrial imagery and contributes to the imaging of unscenic ruin not through the portrayal of landscapes in the abandonment of literal ruin but by evoking a landscape tinged with the idea that such places provide only an absence of anything scenically worth seeing.

The landscape that is shown in the Merilyn Fairskye 2011 photograph, *Playground* (Fig. 34) casts intact urban real estate as unscenic and is, as with Ed Ruscha's image devoid of human presence. The anxiety this image (one from a series portraying the Ukrainian city of Pripyat, near Chernobyl) results from its metonymic association with the Soviet nuclear disaster of 1996. The portrayal of this abandoned village presents real estate that is universally accepted as being too toxic to re-enter. This bleak image of the remaining structures blanketed in snow presents the haunting inertia as routinely prosaic. The connection to a human presence is more strongly and ironic established by the image of Ferris wheel, as it is an object that is incongruously sited within an otherwise dreary landscape.

In addressing the question of the contradictory and complex meanings attributed to ruins, the stark contrast and disparity between ruins as romantic and imaginary and ruins as marginal, prosaic and derelict architectural remnants is highlighted by an analysis of the reworking of the historical and traditional cycle of ruin portrayed by Thomas D. Cole in his *Course of Empire* series, 1833-36, by Ed Ruscha in his series of paintings, *Course of Empire,* at the 2005 Venice Biennale, American Pavilion.

In the original series of five large oil paintings, *The Course of Empire*, Cole depicts the same landscape transforming over time from an ideal natural state to one of desolation. Cole's pessimistic and moralistic images were intended to be prophetic: they depict the demise of a civilised but decadent society and the destruction of the American landscape (Hell 2010, p. 176). Through the symbolism of ruins and apocalypse, the narrative of hubris and the distrust of progress, these works reveal familiar romantic cycles of the rise and eventual fall of powerful empires, challenging the American sense of self-confidence regarding its place in world events. Julia Hell comments: 'While Cole painted in the United States, his concerns and style are clearly formed by European romanticism and its obsession with the rise and fall of empires' (2010, p 175).

The first work in the series, *The Course of Empire – The Savage State* (Fig. 22), presents a healthy wilderness and idealised natural world depicting Native Americans as noble savages.

The second work, *The Course of Empire – The Arcadian or Pastoral State* (Fig. 23), shows that a sympathetic domestication of the wilderness has occurred and rural life is at peace with nature in a classical and idealised honey-coloured landscape.

The third work, *The Course of Empire – The Consummation of Empire* (Fig. 24), depicts Classical temples and fountains within a crowded and decadent cityscape which corresponds to that of Ancient Carthage, while the fourth work, *The Course of Empire – The Destruction* (Fig. 25), depicts a city that has been sacked and destroyed, mirroring the fall of Rome.

The fifth work, *The Course of Empire – Desolation* (Fig. 26), portrays the aftermath. In this sombre twilight scene, destruction is replaced by natural regrowth. Shattered architectural fragments, such as broken bridges and fountains that protrude through the

earth, provide evidence of the destruction. There is no human life: only a solitary bird survives. The series depicts a cautionary tale of the fall of power and glory that waits in a future destroyed by its own stupidity and hubris.

Figure 22

Thomas D. Cole
The Course of Empire – The Savage State, 1834
oil on canvas
100.3 x 161.2 cm
Collection: Luce Center, New York Historical Society Museum and Library, New York

Figure 23

Thomas D. Cole
The Course of Empire – The Arcadian or Pastoral State, 1834
oil on canvas
100.3 x 161.2 cm
Collection: Luce Center, New York Historical Society Museum and Library, New York

Figure 24

Thomas D. Cole
The Course of Empire – The Consummation of Empire, 1835-36
oil on canvas
130.2 × 193 cm
Collection: Luce Center, New York Historical Society Museum and Library, New York

Figure 25

Thomas D. Cole
The Course of Empire – The Destruction, 1836
oil on canvas
100.3 x 161.2 cm
Collection: Luce Center, New York Historical Society Museum and Library, New York

Figure 26

Thomas D. Cole
The Course of Empire – Desolation, 1836
oil on canvas
100.3 x 161.2 cm
Collection: Luce Center, New York Historical Society Museum and Library, New York

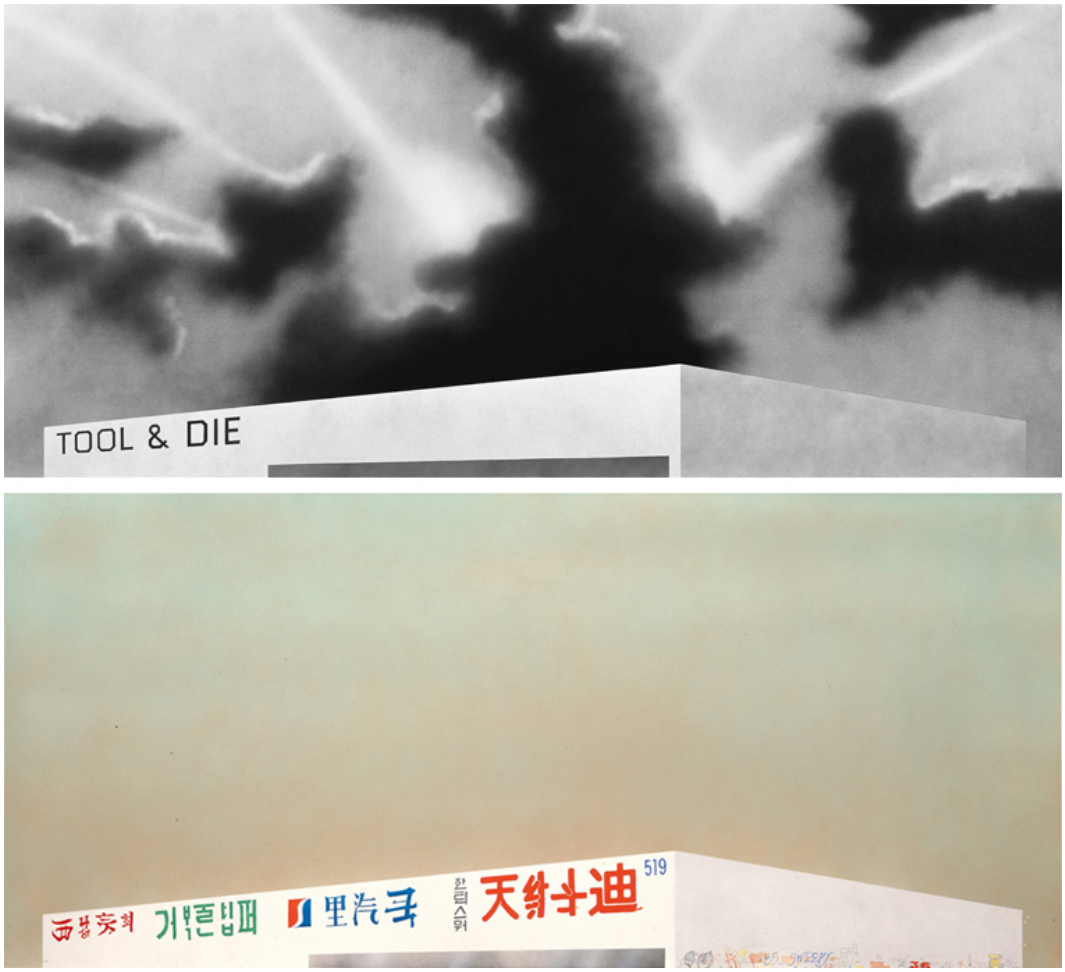
Ruscha's series of paintings, *The Course of Empire* (Figs. 28, 30 & 32), revisit the themes of Cole's paintings and use a serial strategy to chronicle a cycle of progress from birth to destruction. By returning to his previous 1992 *Blue Collar* series (Figs. 27, 29 & 31) of paintings in the *Course of Empire* series, Ruscha's position is to apply his detached gaze to show the buildings, painted in washed out colours, being repurposed as despondent pre-fab outlet stores or auto malls. Ruscha's works are characteristically deserted, emphasising their detached, anonymous quality. Their anxiety is tacit and conveyed through innuendo, calling into question 'blue collar' aspirations in relation to the American Dream.

The two series of paintings were exhibited at the American Pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennale. In the *Course of Empire* series, the same cool, urban Los Angeles landscape is depicted as a corollary colour set to the original 1992 black and white *Blue Collar* series.

However, the *Course of Empire* was reworked in de-saturated colour. The same mundane car culture/popular culture landscape of familiar, box-like, industrial pre-fab buildings reappear with Ruscha's trademark deadpan flatness, as does the use of strong diagonal perspective alluding to the slow drive-by movement. Their apprehensive blankness communicates a sense that progress is lost in obsolescence within an urban wasteground industrial park that could be anywhere, from Los Angeles to Hobart's inner industrial wastegrounds at Derwent Park.

Ruscha's works are not specific images of ruins as fragments or rubble. They do not convey loss and anxiety through sublime turmoil. Neither do they offer direct social commentary through romantic overstatement or reflect entropic crumbling and decay. Their laconic ruin experience is about disconnection and detachment, as if you recognise the disquiet but sense that action would be ineffectual. It simply is what it is.

Figures 27 & 28



Top:
Ed Ruscha, *Blue Collar Tool & Die*, 1992
acrylic on canvas,
132.1 x 294.6 cm
Collection: The Whitney Museum of Art, New York

Bottom:
Ed Ruscha, *The Course of Empire The Old Tool and Die Building*, 2004
acrylic and coloured pencil on canvas
132.4 x 295 cm
Private Collection

Figures 29 & 30

Top:
Ed Ruscha, *Blue Collar Trade School*, 1992
acrylic on canvas
132.1 x 294.6 cm
Private Collection

Bottom:
Ed Ruscha, *The Course of Empire The Old Trade School Building*, 2005
acrylic on canvas
137.5 x 305 cm
Collection: The Whitney Museum of Art, New York

Figures 31 & 32

Top:
Ed Ruscha, *Blue Collar Tires*, 1992
acrylic on canvas
137.2 x 304.8 cm
Museo Nacional Centro De Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid

Bottom:
Ed Ruscha, *The Course of Empire Expansion of the Old Tires Building*, 2005
acrylic on canvas
137.2 x 304.8 cm
Private Collection

In Ruscha's images the effect of impending melancholy is delivered implicitly and the banality is universally familiar and prosaically predictable. In this way, they evoke anxieties surrounding Modernist aspirations in regard to American idealism and progress. Ruscha's position of deadpan detachment functions as a psychological barrier to the emotional connection that is associated with ruin gazing traditions. Rather than gazing, which implies engagement, Ruscha presents an emotional blandness. It is the unresponsiveness and sense of disconnection that is central to the experience of anxiety in this experience of ruin.

The series *Psycho Spaghetti Westerns* (2010-11), illustrates this most completely but within this painting series the reference to anxious ruin and disillusionment with modernity is explicit and uncharacteristic. On frequent journeys on the Pasadena Highway, Ruscha began to collect random trash objects such as tyre shreds, disused packaging, mattresses and pieces of furniture that pile up along the sides of the road. Within these works Ruscha's interest is centred upon piles of waste consumer goods. He is depicting the excesses of First World materialism: the gloss has worn off these pathetic, obsolete objects that are destined for landfill or highway dumps. The compositional strategy of a tilting horizon line reinforces the sense of a world on the slide. As Ruscha explained in an interview about his *Psycho Spaghetti Westerns* series and his most recent series, 'deterioration is a fertile area to explore' (Ruscha 2010, p. 1).

Psycho Spaghetti Western #7, 2010-11 (Fig. 33) is typical of the series in that it contains a bare minimum of deliberately selected compositional props. In this image, the objects are positioned in the middle ground space against an ironically appealingly blended blue sky. The discarded objects are battered domestic cast-offs that are slightly pathetic. Ruscha intensifies this sense of pathos with visual strategies that include the destabilising obliquely tilted horizon line, murky colour, a foreground without vegetation and a pile of waste consumer items. These include broken wooden bookshelves, books

and bits of wooden crates, a stretched canvas, blankets and lengths of soiled fabric amongst straw and sticks. In this image, the objects referenced are not just waste consumer goods. There are discarded cultural objects as well, indicating that high art objects are just as vulnerable in a throw-away society. These items are being pulled, as if by gravity, to the far left of the image, this sense of motion is propelling the viewer to a possible, larger pile outside the picture plane.

Central to Ruscha's *Blue Collar* and *Course of Empire* series (Figs. 27-32) is a sense of ubiquity and banality in his representation of unscenic urban ruins. They are recognised as a worldwide experience, defining the appearance of endless, semi-industrial, wasteground ruin sites on the fringes of larger cities.

Figure 33

Ed Ruscha
Psycho Spaghetti Western #7, 2010-11
acrylic on canvas
177.8 x 350.5 cm
Collection: Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills, California

The disregarded industrial wasteground fringe sites portrayed with deadpan detachment in the works of Ed Ruscha persist as a contemporary urban truism, as evidenced in the works, *Playground* from the *'Plant Life (Chernobyl)'* series, 2011 (Fig. 34) and feature-length film, *Precarious*, 2011 by Merilyn Fairskye which depict the abandoned village of Pripyat. The Soviet wasteland village of Pripyat is a ruin that resists aestheticisation. The evacuated town, three kilometres from the catastrophic Chernobyl nuclear reactor meltdown of 1986, presents a stereotypical similarity to other crumbling architectural remains characterised by catastrophic neglect. The thirty-kilometre exclusion zone around the site is now seventy per cent reforested. The highly contaminated animal and plant species give the outward appearance of health and are resurgent, forming an unintentional wildlife reserve. The ramification of the nuclear catastrophe has implications that are impossible to sentimentalise or romanticise, despite the outward photogenic appearance of a resurgent romantic eco-narrative.

Fairskye presents the disaster site under a covering of snow. The images dispel any romantic connotation of an enchanted winter ruin wonderland, and the harshness of the black and white contrasts heighten the landscape's severity. Ironically, these snowy landscapes depict the snow as a pristine blanket that smothers the nuclear waste residue during the winter. As snowscapes, the dilapidated and abandoned ruined city structures are bleak and dystopian. The irony is particularly evident in film footage of the pathetic snow-bound Ferris wheel of the fun park.

Figure 34

Merilyn Fairskye
Playground, from *'Plant Life (Chernobyl)'* series, 2011
pigment print
40 x 109 cm
Collection of the Artist

6. The Myer site

Contemporary artists' concern with the prosaic nature of contemporary ruin sites has been influential in sparking my desire to visually and spatially understand and image the distinctive features a particular local site, the Myer site, and to test its possibilities within an expanded definition of a contemporary unscenic ruin. A similar process of visual identification with less spectacular and unremarkable aspects of such neglected and marginalised sites, exemplified by the previously discussed artists, prompted my desire to probe the assumptions and implications of their 'vapidity and dullness' (Flam 1996, p. 13). Consequently, I undertook to fully understand the physical and spatial materiality of the Myer site and explore its apparent misrepresentations. This took the form of a case study (Figs. 35 & 36). The significance of its conceptual and visual complexities prompted research questions around the compromising picturesque spatial formulae, the visual ramifications of the barriers which surrounded the site, and the public hostility and commercial anxiety its ongoing existence provoked.

The privately owned site presented as a large and deep crater, in the CBD of Hobart, Tasmania, between 2007-2014. It was created by a catastrophic fire event at the Myer department store in 2007, which destroyed the entire building and its below-ground infrastructure (Figs. 37 & 38). It was partially cleared and fenced off. Intriguingly, its ruinous material remains continued to crumble almost imperceptibly and it was colonised by vermin and weeds and covered a sedimentary wasteground layer of rubbish. No one died in the fire, so it was not regarded as a trauma-scape (in the way other urban catastrophic events such as the Christchurch earthquake are) but as a real estate ruin. Observing it on an almost daily basis over seven years, the site was puzzling and provocative. Its continued presence in a prime real estate setting provoked a range

Figures 35 & 36

Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014
showing the site as wasteground

Figures 37 & 38

Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014
showing ruderal vegetation and debris

of responses from the commercial sector, the wider Hobart public and the Hobart City Council. It became a dilapidated, obsolete and commercially dysfunctional eyesore, existing uncomfortably within an otherwise cohesive urban landscape. It was variously referred to as ‘a blight’ (Harry 2014, p. 26) on the overall character and appearance of the city, and described locally as ‘bomb crater’ (Thomas 2014, p. 26) in the middle of town. I believe that its location determined its public reception, as it would have attracted less negativity had it appeared in the fringe suburbs of the city where, as in Passaic, New Jersey, such dilapidation is more common and causes less commercial anxiety.

The site was a visual anomaly. It presented over time as a derelict prosaic wasteground space containing ruinous material remains of its former life, but also exposing remnant heritage architectural ruin material (Figs. 39 & 40). The site spanned two city blocks. Due to its unstable condition, it was enclosed by perimeter wire barrier fencing and hoardings which made it impenetrable to legal public access. A band of street artists regularly made use of the perimeter walls and graffiti covered many of the structural elements. Aesthetically, its physical features were entirely unscenic, comprising slimy pools of foetid water, ruderal vegetation, cracked and blackened rubble walls, defaced and degraded paint surfaces, and remnant buckled infrastructural fragments. The intrusive perimeter fencing prevented 360-degree panoramic observation of the site. These fragmented and compromised views forced a preference for the immediate foreground, rather than picturesque space, in visual depictions of the site. The odd angles and juxtapositions of shallow and fragmented spatial arrangements reflected the destabilised character of the site: it was hemmed in by other intact buildings around its perimeter that presented more cohesive and straightforward spatial relationships.

Figures 39 & 40

Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014
showing graffiti, perimeter fencing and original sandstone site wall

Initially, the site's physical, safety and access impenetrability seemed to obscure its potential for visualisation and thwart an expansive collection of documentary data from the entire site (Figs. 41 & 42). A change to the project's emphasis that considered the sightline barrier blockages, the information compromises resulting from glimpses through screening apertures, and the prescribed street-level vantage points caused by the perimeter fencing provided the possibility for an unexpected creative scope within the research project. This prioritised posing questions around the visualisation of instability, perceptual destabilisation and fragmentation. The Myer site presented a unique, finite and unusual opportunity to visually question the site's distinctive combination of ruin and ruinous qualities.

The visualisation of instability, perceptual destabilisation and fragmentation emerged from the case study research as interchangeable strategies for both the imaging and the imagining of the contemporary unscenic ruin. As such, they reflect the distinctive on-site features that prevented its depiction through harmonious and unifying picturesque spatial formulae. Perceptual and spatial instability due to the compromising barrier interference are contextualised in the Chapter Three discussion on the interference patterns of raster, Benday dot and moiré. Chapter Three also includes a discussion of collage as the strategy that best accounts for spatial fragmentation and the imagining of the corollary state of collapse.

Figures 41 & 42

Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014
showing barrier fencing and original sandstone site wall

Chapter Three

Strategies and Context

1. Introduction

In introducing the strategies and contextual information discussed within this chapter it is necessary to provide some background information into the transitional development leading to their rationale and resolution.

The initial stages of this project were characterised by a lack of clear direction, as there were numerous options for exploration within both the imaging and the imagining methodological possibilities. Two directions were evident at the beginning of the project; the imaging of a specific and unique site, its physicality and its perceptual challenges and what scope and potential it presented as a speculative site for the imagining of a universal experience of urban ruin. As a studio –based project exploratory processes were tested in regard to picturing physical and imaginary space. The research outcomes required that both directional streams coexist and compete with one another, vying for attention. Both presented equally worthwhile research paths for an investigation into instability, collapse and fragmentation and as such highlighted the visual breadth of possibility involved in picturing contemporary urban ruin experience.

The woodcut prints image visual destabilisation caused by intermediary screening due to barrier fencing, which acted as disorienting obstacles that impeded clear and accurate observation of the site. This aspect of the research considered the inevitable spatial disconnection from the actual and immediate disorienting experience of collapse. A reference was made to the patterns of visual disturbance inherent in low- resolution analogue television and video footage found in the woodcut prints of artist Christiane Baumgartner. Her works mediate and filter the visual information through moire and raster screens that disorient and deny accurate focus and discernibility. Baumgartner's

focus upon the visual and spatial instability involved in perceiving information provided a trigger for my own wood cut print series in terms of physical as opposed to psychological distance and flattened pictorial space. Such perceptual strategies were not considered as conducive or applicable to the depiction of imaginary space that characterised the drawings.

This latter imaginative direction was in keeping with the image making content and strategies such as collapse that were explored prior to the commencement of the research project. These were put aside in order to grapple with hybrid nature of the site's appearance that was characterised by both the innocuous prosaic reality and the dishevelled visual overload. This process was an exploratory one involving a questioning of pictorial space through the development of visual strategies characteristic of the site's visual and perceptual instability and fragmentation. The research outcomes from this exploration in turn sparked a sense that such strategies could also drive a body of imagery that revisited collapse through the imaginative and the speculative in order to create new works. The resulting body of drawings connected with past methodological approaches to ruin but forged a new direction inspired by imaginative supposition that combined a range of prosaic objects and detritus with classical fragments that consider the universal nature of contemporary ruin experience.

Through sustained research, this project has established two key visual strategies that probe the experience and imaging of the contemporary ruin. First, the unstable image as defined through visual and perceptual interference patterns; second, the fragmentation of unified pictorial space as represented through the illogical possibilities characteristic of collage.

The experiential, visual, physical and perceptual instability encountered at prosaic ruin sites present a spatial awkwardness and disquiet that results from their banality. This is

at odds with picturesque figure/ground conventions, and their dullness eliminates the aesthetics of romantic nostalgia and sentimentality.

This chapter examines the work of a number of artists whose visual strategies have informed my own. They have been grouped under two headings – the unstable image, and spatial fragmentation – which correspond to the two main strategies I have employed to disrupt the picturesque construction of space. Through an analysis of relevant artwork examples (such as *Haystack no. 2* by Roy Lichtenstein; *Girlfriends* and *Bunnies* by Sigmar Polke; the diptych, *Formation no.1* and *no.2,* by Christiane Baumgartner; Juan Gris' *The Sun Blind*, 1914; and Robert Klippel's *LS111,* 1979) the aim is to establish how these strategies can be employed to achieve spatial disunity, disorientation, confusion, uncertainty, perceptual disturbance and visual impenetrability. Both visual instability and fragmentation dislodge the unity and harmony of the picture plane, denying picturesque space. These two separate, but equal, visual strategies have driven the research outcomes in order to image both the experiential reality encountered at the contemporary ruin sites and the imaginative and speculative potential of the historical, representational legacy of ruin provided by artists, such as Piranesi, Gilpin and Friedrich.

2 The Unstable Image

The destabilising and filtering effects of visual and perceptual interference patterns (such as the horizontal scanning lines of the Benday dot, raster and moiré) in the work of the artists Roy Lichtenstein, Sigmar Polke and Christiane Baumgartner have influenced my experimentation with screening devices to produce visual disorientation. Each of these interference patterns performs a slightly different role in creating visual instability. The Benday dot is an analogue commercial printing technique that produces tone and shading from screens of dotted grid patterns. The raster effect is a grid of digital pixels linked to early television. Moiré is an effect more overtly linked with visual perception, which creates a shimmering or wavering in image definition. Sets of lines or dots are superimposed over each other and differ at an angle or in size or spacing.

Roy Lichtenstein and Sigmar Polke share common strategies but achieve different visual outcomes in their manipulation of Benday dot screens. These commonalities include jarringly disconnected colour relationships, scale alterations, and the distortions of the edge and grid structures to accentuate the disorientating visual pattern interferences that cause perceptible instability.

Christiane Baumgartner creates a raster of parallel horizontal lines applied to a mixture of analogue woodcut and digital video sources to demonstrate the optical role of standpoint in relation to physical distance and perceptibility. This synthesis of image definition in relation to optical alignment occurs through the combination of wood grain surface, textural pattern and fault-line cutting.[12] The resultant accentuated edge

[12] Fault-line cutting is a technique in wood block cutting that accentuates the linear inconsistencies that occur in the process of transferring the original source material to the block surface. It prevents distinct and sharp edges when cutting lines and therefore prioritises blurring within the printed image.

irregularity renders her images indiscernible and unfocused at close range, but clearly in alignment from a distance.

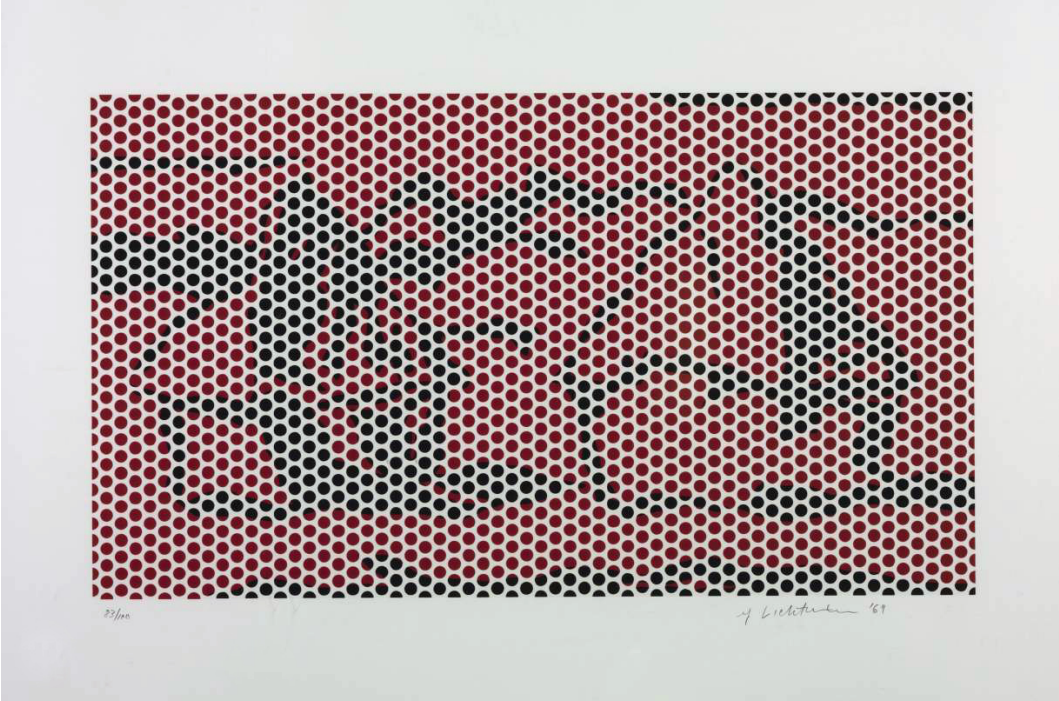
2.1 Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997)

The use of Benday dots to create visual instability is well exemplified by Roy Lichtenstein's *Haystack no. 2*, 1969 (Fig. 43). The original Impressionist painting series of haystack images by Claude Monet, produced in 1890-1891, dealt with the recording of fleeting glimpses of visual information through colour, clarity of light and sensation. Lichtenstein created his own reductive paraphrasing of this historical series by overlapping two interference Benday dot screens that probe the limits of visual sensory experience through a series of silkscreen and lithographic prints.

The lithograph, *Haystack no. 2*, combines a limited set of colour and tonal relationships: red, black and white. The background layer presents the virtually indistinguishable red and black Benday dot screen layer, which is overlaid with a single vibrant and optically destabilising white layer of Benday dots. The merger of the two interference dot pattern layers creates an image of acute flatness but flickering impenetrability, denying illusory figure/ground relationships and creating a visual struggle in terms of isolating or accurately defining any recognisable form. This outcome is a consequence of the background layer of red and black dots being covered with a mechanised layer of white Benday dot-patterned mesh. The fundamental regularity of this white dot layer eliminates picturesque spatial formulae entirely. A reductive and impenetrable blockage is created, eliminating a nuanced tonal range and establishing a one-dimensional picture plane. Lichtenstein's *Haystack no. 2* image limits the complexities of atmospheric sensation and distance, characteristic of Monet's original haystack image, to a foreground optical interplay, reducing them to the visually and graphically unambiguous.

The commercial printing use of the Benday dot was a feature of analogue media and advertising. It appeared as an enveloping layer of equally spaced dots of varying scales

Figure 43



Roy Lichtenstein, 1969
Haystack no. 2
lithograph on paper
34.2 x 59.7 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

that gelled and blurred together and coalesced to create an image, similar to pixels in digital printing. Lichtenstein's use of their characteristic mechanised barrier uniformity, created through the formulaic regularity of a dot stencil and applied by a roller, is particularly evident and desensitising in this image. It establishes an absolute and frustrating sensory separation from discernable clarity as the instability of the consistently intensifying optical oscillations of the foreground white dot layer overpower and deny definition to the substrate layer. Lichtenstein's overlapping of the two Benday dot screen layers condenses the clarity of the red and black haystack layer into a vague suggestive outline of an object characteristic of imperfect information, thus setting up an awkward representational compression involving the boundaries of visual and perceptual stability. The result is difficult to visually comprehend, as the edges of the tonally similar red and black colours dissolve, thus breaking down the structural integrity and distinctive identity of the object. Isolated from the entire series of haystack images or viewed without the title as an informative guide, the red and black substrate layer could depict any object and this adds to the visual frustration. The image is perceptually mysterious, forcing the viewer to carefully scrutinise it for a logical connection to a recognisably stable form. In this way Lichtenstein's image, *Haystack no. 2*, structurally overlays a format consisting of mutually unstable and competing interference layers, optically merged to induce a state of perceptual and visual frustration and inconclusiveness.

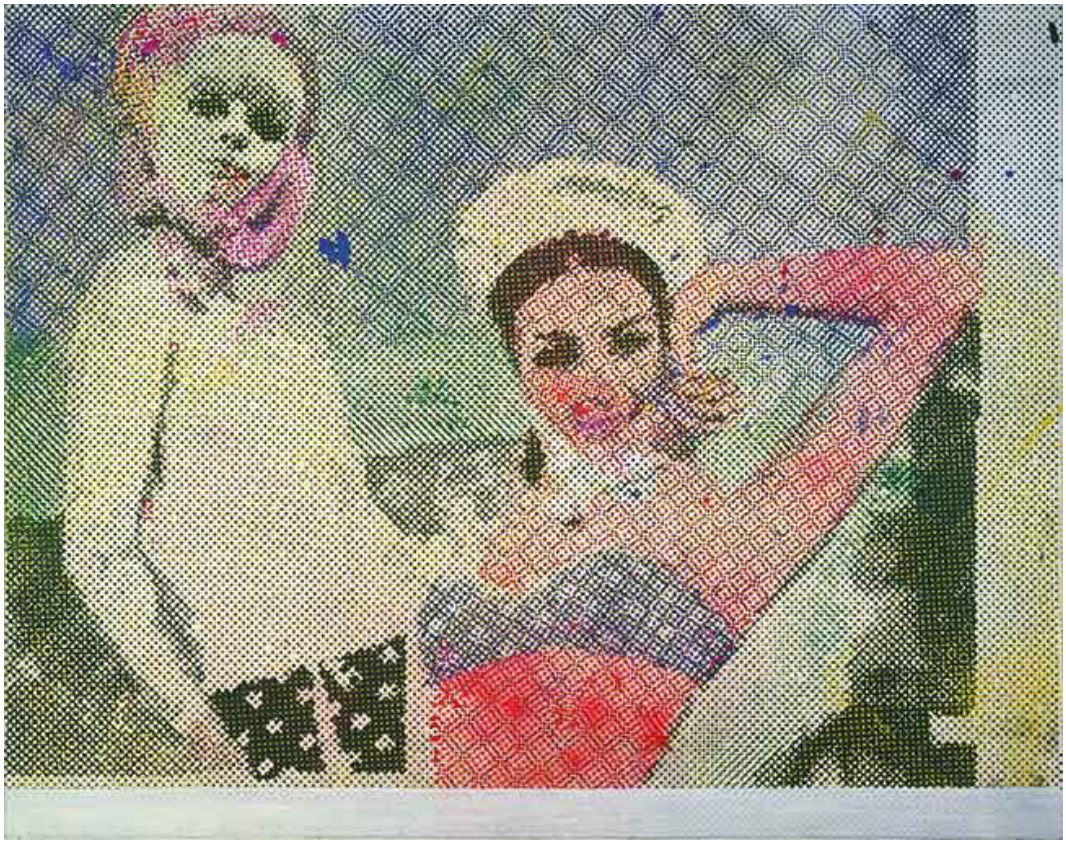
2.2 Sigmar Polke (1941-2010)

Like Lichtenstein, Sigmar Polke creates spatial blockage and visual destabilisation through his improvisational use of Benday dot pattern interference within the *Raster Bilder* series, 1963-1968. Polke's series appropriates imagery from analogue advertising and media sources, re-examining commercial printing concepts typical of these processes, such as layering, repetition and modification. In a comparable manner to Lichtenstein's structural Benday dot interference format, but pursuing different methodological procedures and graphic outcomes, Polke's *Raster Bilder* artworks demonstrate how the raster dot provides a visual and perceptual filter that affects image discernibility.

Hannah Klemm observes that Polke was 'fascinated by the notion of perception and vision being in constant flux' (2016, p. 10). To give a visual form to his fascination with raster dot filters, Polke concentrated on the materiality of the dots themselves, investigating in what capacity, individually or collectively, they influenced the process of image reproduction. He achieved this by devising distortions within the process of photocopy magnification, by contriving variations in the dot alignment, by a repetitious over-layering of random colour dot screens, and also by placing emphasis on the playful accidental blemish.

The artwork, *Girlfriends*, 1965-66 (Fig. 44), is an early example of raster interference, which illustrates Polke's ability to manipulate and improvise the scale and spacing of colour and dot pattern in order to cause visual instability. Collaged from poor-quality photographic magazine source material, the image depicts two young women in bathing suits. Polke has re-assembled the clippings, enlarging and merging the dots together. The typographical layout of the repetitive dot-pattern strips and their degraded edges overlap, merging to form a composition of unevenly aligned diagonal shapes. The

Figure 44



Sigmar Polke
Girlfriends, 1965-66
dispersion paint on canvas
150 x 190 cm
Collection: Sammlung Froehlich, Stuttgart

amalgamated patches of bright synthetic colour, such as scarlet red and cobalt blue, are combined with bleached yellows that resemble muddied splotches, carelessly applied. These tawdry dabs randomly differentiate the women's bodies by overlapping the dots at the edges of the forms, confusing their anatomical definition and flattening the picture plane. This pictorially inconclusive structure is further compressed by successive layers of smaller, out-of-registration dot screens that destroy any formal clarity in large sections of the image. The women's facial definition is reduced to a blob of enlarged dots around their eyes and this also distorts their mouths. Their bodies are smeared with a jarringly hot-coloured dot pattern, which contributes to an overall effect of tabloid cheapness.

Polke openly improvised creating a serendipitous process of image alteration involving a distortion to the uniform edge of the raster dots. This enabled him to degrade the accuracy of the visual information. In this manner, his approach to process imposed a unique model that dissected the possibilities of the commercial printing process. He extended the role of modification using it as a filtering process that affects visual certainty and stability within an image. As Christopher Cherix has commented, Polke's intention was to distort and to 'push the printing process to breaking point, where the image begins to lose its readability' (2014, p. 163). Polke describes his approach to the raster dot thus:

> The raster to me is a system, a principle, a method, structure. It divides, disperses, arranges and makes everything the same… I like that the motifs switch between being recognisable and being unrecognisable, the ambiguity of this situation, the fact that it stays open… (2014, p. 53).

By exploiting the potential defects that were the consequence of photocopy enlargements and scrutinising the degraded dot irregularities of this cheap reproduction process, Polke's raster images provide contextual examples for the shift of emphasis away from the representation of accurately delineated and focused form to one accentuating visual frustration. Polke also augmented this process through the inclusion of hand-drawn ink outlines, wispy lines and blotches that, particularly if seen from a distance, force the eye to re-evaluate the information in abstract rather than representational terms. In this manner, interference strategies such as distortion and blurring alter the comprehensive regularity of the drawn or cut mark, reducing their perceptible and the discernible qualities, and therefore, prefacing more elusive, nonconcrete graphic elements. The certainty of a visual judgement, its accuracy and its clarity, most often associated with a representational image, is diminished.

As a methodological visual strategy, this approach is highly relevant to the contextual discussion of my project's woodcut print series. The visual interference caused by dot or line scale enlargement and the repeated breaking down of the mechanised certainty of mark edges accentuates their visual irregularities and provides scope for the image quality to degrade and dissolve into perceptible uncertainty, thereby contributing an optical variability that this research identifies as the type of imperfect and unstable information.

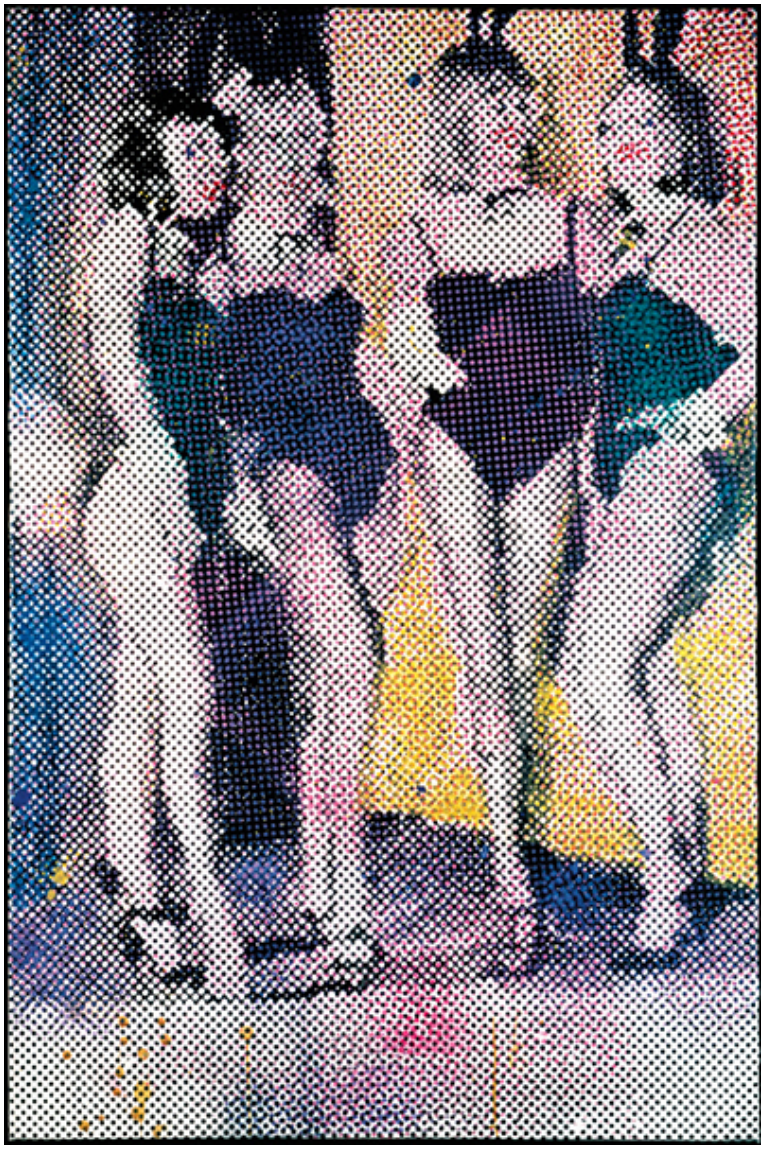
3. Colour as Interference

The use of colour as a form of visual interference is another important aspect of Polke's work. Polke had a background as a stained-glass worker, and developed an interest in the properties of luminescent, transparent coloured glass. He channelled this awareness of the effects of light and colour as a factor in destabilising perceptual certainty in his paintings. As an inventive colourist, Polke made direct use of unusual colour found in fabric patterns, iridescent pigment emulsions and materials (such as resin, lacquer, and silver oxide) to create distinctive surfaces receptive to the oscillating properties of light in combination with his familiar strategy of altering the edges of the raster dots. This is evident in his work *Bunnies*, 1966 (Fig. 45).

Bunnies portrays four fishnet-stocking-clad Playboy Bunnies taken from a tabloid media source. Polke deliberately reconfigured the original photograph through a series of repeated photocopy dot enlargements. Like the distortion strategies previously discussed in the image, *Girlfriends,* 1965-66, this forces the collapse of recognisable formal edge clarity within the female forms. The result of this process is the distortion of the women's facial forms to a dehumanising, featureless mask of non-aligned and indistinct coloured splotches.

Polke's use of colour in the image, *Bunnies,* 1966, provides evidence of the capacity of colour to act as a perceptually interfering and visually misleading element. The murkiness of the colour range and its flattening opacity act to destabilise the observable clarity of the forms, thereby forcing a separation between the representational form and the sum of its constituent parts – in this case, the raster dots. Polke's seemingly haphazard application of colour to this image pictorially demonstrates two important

Figure 45



Sigmar Polke, 1966
Bunnies
acrylic on canvas
150 x 100 cm
Collection: Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.

aspects of the role of colour in the creation of visual instability within an image. Firstly, this instability is achieved through the random application of colour across the painting surface, forcing the blending together of the colour and the dot edge. This creates the impression of indecisive and interrupted movement across the picture plane, flattening the pictorial space. For example, while the women's legs are discernible, in the remainder of the image both the dot forms and the opaque surface quality of the colour form inconclusive clusters and smears that resist any colour gradation or intensity. The colours are gaudy yellows, blues, pinks and purples, characteristic of the tabloid nature of the subject matter. As the colour is applied inconsistently across the picture surface and does not delineate the forms, it obscures and flattens them.

Further contributing to the reduction in formal definition and the discernibility of the forms is the fact that Polke applies the paint without acknowledging standard figure/ground relationships. For example, in some parts of the image, such as the blue or yellow areas, it is smeared over the top surface of the dot layer, blocking the clarity, while at other points it complies with the standard figure/ground relationship of dark colour over a lighter-coloured substrate layer. Polke further visually complicates the image with double overlays of dots screens of varying widths, as well as reversing their positive and negative values.

The overall effect of this serendipitous process-driven approach to the application of colour, as well as the visual disturbance caused by the distortions in the uniformity of raster dot screen layer, produces a spatially fluctuating and visually indeterminate image that disperses the compositional unity of the surface.

3.1 Christiane Baumgartner (b. 1967)

The woodcut images of Christiane Baumgartner impose a linear textural structure of raster interference across an entire image surface that reduce clarity almost to the point of abstraction, while also displaying similarities with the filtering fault-lines found in a moiré. Her subjects are imaged through a disassociating and visually reductive process that deliberately organises and separates the visual information from its original source. In this way, her initial material is interpreted through and reliant on the density of bands of horizontal parallel lines and is reduced to what the artist refers to as 'information lines' (Coldwell 2011, p. 6) which depend on the viewing distance for their clarity and discernibility. Understanding the relationship between viewing distance and the discernibility of the image, Baumgartner also refers to these 'as a disruption to easy reading' which subsequently takes the image discernibility to 'the point when a line becomes a drawing or when the line becomes a letter' (2011, p. 3).

Baumgartner's visually elusive woodcut prints, based on her own in-transit video stills and low-resolution historical analogue television footage, display an approach that re-structures and reconfigures the initial source material, channelling her particular awareness of the visualisation of time, speed, distance and emotional detachment. Her works organise this visual information by way of linear and grid structures that filter and manipulate image focus and resolution into a pattern of visual disturbance. The resultant merger of cut lines and wood grain texture create a shimmering linear instability that perceptibly shifts and wavers. In this way, Baumgartner strategically controls the viewer's ability to comprehend her imagery through a combination of factors: the physical viewing distance; the optical interference of the horizontal raster pattern; and an emphasis on the interference produced by the intrusive surface irregularities of the wood grain texture.

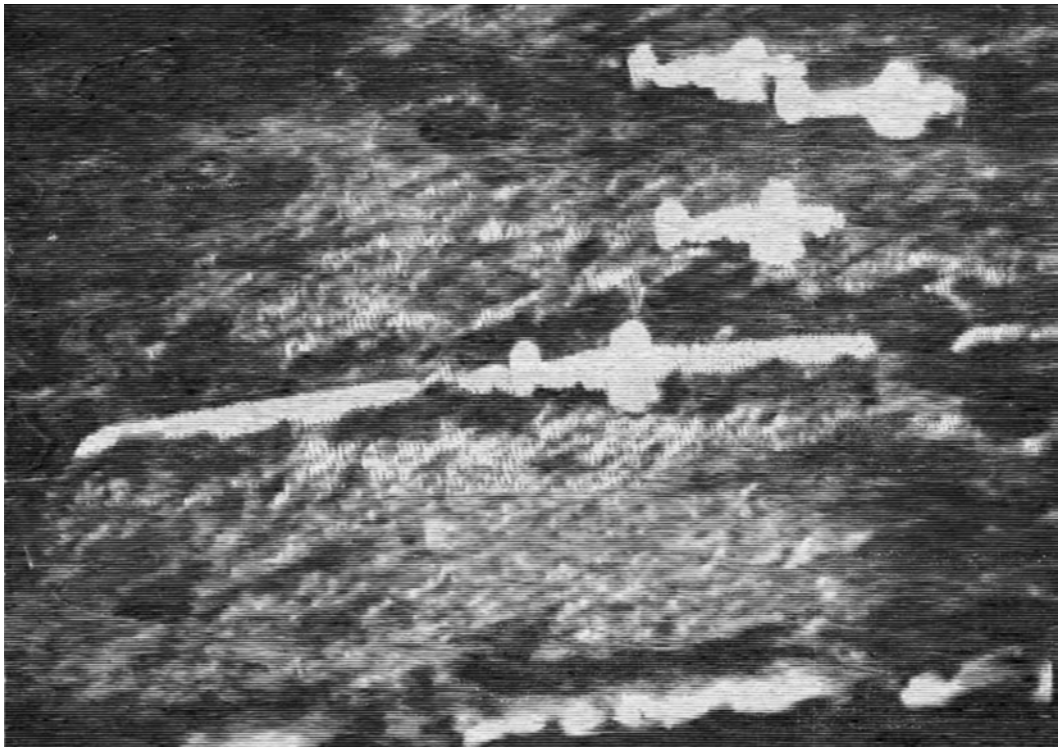
This is exemplified by her diptych, *Formation no. 1* and *no. 2*, 2006 (Figs. 46 & 47). The work is based upon World War II footage of aerial bombing over Dresden in 1944, videoed by the artist from her television screen. *Formation no. 1*, depicts the interplay, interpreted through raster lines, created between aircraft shadow formations cast onto the ground and the blinding flashes caused by sunlight upon the metallic aircraft fuselages. The flickering, refractive sensation of light and the tonal contrast of the cast shadow are fused with the large negative, but formally inconclusive, white aircraft shapes which reference the motion of flight and the impact of bombing. The second panel, *Formation no. 2*, depicts the swooping movement of the bombers within an aerial background of rippling raster lines, suggesting the explosions happening at ground level.

The image distortion occurring within both the panels abstracts the video source material through a sequence of interpretively reductive translation processes that increase the sense of separation from their original source. The video stills are interpreted into an analogue linear interference pattern formed in combination with the surface textural qualities of the wood block grain. The synthesis of these dual processes causes a de-generation in the image clarity and a subsequent representational inconclusiveness. The visual illusiveness is intensified as the fault-line pattern inaccuracies flatten and overwhelm the representational nature of the imagery, preventing a separation of the foreground from the background space. The eye is drawn from left to right across the shallow space of the picture plane, not back into deep space. As cut lines avoid distinctive edge definition, the jet fighter shapes blur, graphically reducing them to vague positive or negative shapes. Their visual legibility collapses into the horizontal line bands of complementary contrasts appearing in the sky areas of the two images. This work demonstrates the extensiveness and the comprehensiveness of visual instability that results from raster interference patterning that is created through

Figure 46

Christiane Baumgartner
Formation no. 1, 2006
woodcut on Kozo paper (diptych)
172 x 226 cm
Private Collection

Figure 47



Christiane Baumgartner
Formation no. 2, 2006
woodcut on Kozo paper (diptych)
180 x 234 cm
Private Collection

the strategy of filtering bands of horizontal parallel cut lines. The visual complexity of the original imagery, as seen in the ground shadows or the vague smoking formations, has been reduced through the disrupting linear density and the compression of tonal contrasts and limited spatial depth that results in a visually inconclusive image and an aestheticised formal detachment from the original emotive content of the footage.

In conclusion, the imposition of raster interferences such as the Benday dot by artists Lichtenstein and Polke, and Baumgartner's use of banding lines in parallel alignment provide a contextual framework for my employment of interference patterns as a key strategy for giving visual form to the experience of the contemporary ruin as something that is perceptually illusive.

4. Spatial Fragmentation

The second main strategy employed in my work to create visual disorientation is fragmentation and collage. Fragmentation dislodges the unity and harmony of the picture plane, thereby denying picturesque space. The process of collage also contributes to this, by reconstructing the constituent fragments to form other less reality-based options within the picture plane and delivering an image of the unreal, the imagined, through a deliberate interventionist process of piecing together the mismatched, intentionally non-aligned components for visual effect. Fragmentation and collage imply a process of imaginative reconstruction that forms an alternative to experiential reality.

Contextually, a connection can be made to both spatial and object fragmentation by the cut and paste collaging demonstrated by Synthetic Cubism. An example of this is the painting, *The Sun Blind*, 1914, by Juan Gris, which is discussed in greater detail below. A more contemporary example of collage by Robert Klippel, *LS111*, 1979, is also particularly relevant for my work. Both works present evidence for the visual disruption typical of fragmentation, and for the imaginative, reconstructive spatial and imaging outcomes made possible through the pictorial arrangement of the fragments.

4.1 Juan Gris (1887-1927)

Gris's image, *The Sun Blind*, 1914 (Fig. 48), presents the separation of fragmentation and the spatial disorientation and dislocation of collage, actual and compositional, as a visual interference strategy that is not a perceptual filter but one that dislocates the unity of pictorial space. This is achieved through the usage of an apparently illogical arrangement of randomly connected, cut fragments which are reinforced in this example by the spatial disharmony of multiple viewpoints.

This work is an experiment in the destabilisation of pictorial space comprising elongated sections of simple domestic objects in a spatially disparate arrangement, which is fragmented by the multiplicity of its geometric compositional incongruities. Gris's image demonstrates a confronting compositional instability, as seen in the fragmentation of the planar wooden table surface, the abrupt diagonals, and the angularity of the blinds which slip forward and centre simultaneously, almost tipping up and falling out of the foreground pictorial space.

Contextually, Gris's spatial reconstructions overlap with the visual outcomes of this project's research: the perspective is similarly isometric, stacking upward and toppling forward, allowing no depth of field. In addition to this, the true scale of the objects is disregarded. They all seem to be of equal size, and are portrayed without tonal modelling or atmospheric blending or blurring. They do not recede through spatial illusion beyond the blocking foreground space, which is filled in on three sides by the use of wedges of solid black gouache paint. Some objects, such as the green and black vase shape, take on the multiple viewpoints but are not dramatically dissected into multiple overlapping planes.

The fragmented compositional collage of drawn elements strengthens the image's spatial incongruity. Yet, when amalgamated, they also rebuild and construct an alternative

Figure 48

Juan Gris
The Sun Blind, 1914
gouache, paper, chalk and charcoal on canvas
92.1 x 72.7 cm
Collection: Tate Britain, London

inventive spatial reality through the incorporation of the actual torn *Le Socialiste* newspaper fragment. This interventionist capacity, integral to collage, establishes dual outcomes, for, while collage dismantles illusory space, it also simultaneously reconstructs a spatial alternative to experiential reality. This is based upon the illogical, the accidental and the imaginative, and, as such, provides an important contextual reference for the role of imagination in my project's drawing series.

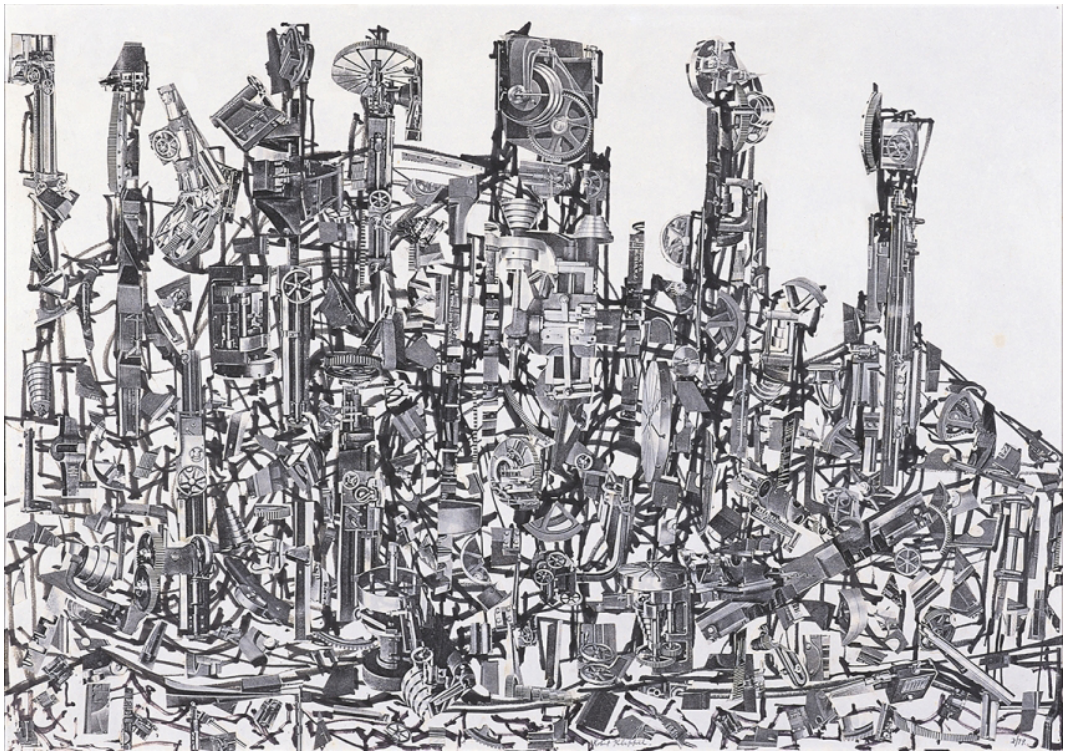
4.2 Robert Klippel (1920-2001)

For Klippel, in the image *LS111*, 1979 (Fig. 49) the primary concern is not with fragmentation as a way to displace pictorial space as a simplifying step towards abstraction, as is the case with Gris's image *The Sun Blind*. Klippel's fragmentation presents a rearrangement suggesting underlying narrative intentions. It is the representational nature of the constituent fragments and Klippel's deliberate pictorial re-arrangement into an image mound resembling a scrap metal stack that creates narrative tension between what we continue to associate with and recognise as Klippel's sculptural objects and their dislodgement from their original source. This process facilitates their subsequent reconstruction into an altered pictorial hybrid state incorporating elements of both the logical and the illogical.

The image presents an example of an imaginative reconstructive collage process. Klippel merges cut and pasted fragments of photographs sourced from engineering manuals, magazines and photographs of his own sculptural works, which are reassembled to incorporate a variety of simultaneously clashing viewpoints and a rhythmical rise and fall of interconnecting planes. This work and other similar collages and photomontages are characterised by the image density of carefully cut photographic fragments, of varying scales, tightly abutting one another, and synthesised into multiple viewpoints of a chaotic, junkyard pile of machinery cogs, wheels and metal scraps. This displacement from single to multiple viewpoints is a visual strategy that reflects instability and shifts the image into the field of the illogical. The cut photographic pieces are constructed as non-aligning facets and disjunctive fragments.

Compositionally, within this image, Klippel is ironically re-forming the separate representational pieces into an imaginative/unreal re-configuration, effecting a new non-illusionist spatial synthesis based on chance through random placement. The collage process reconstitutes the pieces to form an invented, parallel reality of image

Figure 49



Robert Klippel
LS111, 1979
felt pen and collage of photographed machine parts
41.5 x 58.5 cm
Private Collection

instability as the identifiable fragment competes with the repeated effect of mass visual saturation. These mostly intact objects occupy the entire surface of the picture plane, both horizontally as well as forming eight vertical towers of junk. The image colour is a monochromatic metallic silvery blue/grey. The constituent parts are rhythmically amalgamated and, as they pile up within the bottom section of the image, a road-like band appears to curve around the heap creating a sense of circular upward movement. The pictorial space is aerial. It contains no vanishing point, mid or background spatial depth, causing a characteristic compressed space that is synonymous with the non-illusionistic shallow depth and facetted re-mixing methodology of Cubist collage.

Klippel's intersecting network of cuttings is spatially destabilising. The eye movement is forced across the image without relief or rest: there are no blank spaces within the main body of the composition. Piece after piece is overlapped and interwoven to form a conglomerate and illogical mass. Everything is presented at the same tonal pitch and without an organised compositional structure. His method involves a process of piecing together a variety of constituent fragments and amassing tottering stockpiles of debris. Cut from the initial source material, the components are selected, repeated and deliberately altered, to form vertical stacks of illogically reconfigured elements.

This project's research presents comparable strategies of destabilisation to Klippel's deliberate compositional fragmentations and spatial re-organisations, as evidenced by the technique of repetitive overlapping fragments stacked vertically which, through their placement, allow for subtle tonal shifts within the composition. The cut photographic fragments of wheels and metal scaffolding reflect the detritus of the modern industrial world. The illogical scale of the fragments and juxtapositions are characteristic of the process of collage, and are analogous with the destabilisation of compositional unity within the picture plane and the fracturing of the depth of illusory space.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, analysis of key works establishes a contextual framework for the project's visual strategies – the unstable image and fragmentation – in relation to imaging and imagining the contemporary ruin. These separate, but equal, visual strategies have driven the research outcomes to image both the experiential reality encountered at contemporary ruin sites and the imaginative and speculative potential of the historical legacy of ruin representation.

In the first part of this chapter, the discussion centred upon the visual destabilisation that results from the disruption to picturesque spatial formulae by interference patterns such as the Benday dot, raster and moiré, as evidenced in key works by Roy Lichtenstein, Sigmar Polke and Christiane Baumgartner.

In contrast to these strategies of visual interference, in the second part of the Chapter, the artists Juan Gris and Robert Klippel have provided contextual references for the alternative contribution of fragmentation and collage to the project's intention of creating unstable imagery through the compositional dislodgement of the unity of the picture plane.

The following chapter provides an in depth analysis of my artworks that employ these strategies of destabilisation and fragmentation of visual form. It will discuss how patterns of interference have been utilised in the series of colour woodcut prints which reference the Myer site. In this series, the spatial dislocation and visual obfuscation of the barrier fencing around the site has been interpreted through interlocking grid-like patterns and flat backgrounds of high visibility colour with overlays of linear geometric patterns. The aperture gaps that appear as random breaks in the perimeter fencing mesh

and the wire are also incorporated and visualised through the linear horizontal cut marks, forcing a breakdown of image discernibility. In the second series of works, comprised of drawings, instability is given visual form by re-focusing, not upon visual interference patterns, but upon spatial fragmentation and the state of collapse. Image fragments from a variety of sources are cut and reassembled (as collaged source material) in piles of debris that rise rather than recede. Compositionally, the unity of the picture plane is destabilised by the incongruity of the colliding object fragments, the clashing angles at which they fall to rest, and the non-alignment of the panel format.

Chapter Four

Methodology

1. Introduction

The focus of this chapter is a discussion of the strategies that informed the resulting images and representations of the unscenic ruin. The final body of work comprises two series, each of which employ different strategies to subvert picturesque conventions in the depiction of the ruin.

The first is a series of woodcut prints which explores the role of spatial and perceptual challenges posed by visual and physical impediments preventing access to urban ruinscapes. These images were begun at an early point in the project, in February 2014, in direct response to the physical barriers and visual limitations encountered at the Myer site. The timing of reconstruction at the site began earlier than expected, in April 2014, when the settlement over infrastructure reinstatement costs, between all interested parties, was finally and unexpectedly reached after seven years of negotiation. The discussion recognises that the experience of a contemporary ruin might be impossible for the public due to a range of physical impediments and bureaucratic protocols. The setting up of a constrained sequence of visual experiences that are deficient in scope and complexity is taken into consideration. This research refers to this as imperfect or flawed information that is unstable because it is not freely visible, extensive nor definitive, particularly in relation to distance and spatial certainty.

This has implications for rendering images of such sites and the research considers the following points:

- the perceptual difficulties presented by visually unstable data or material;
- the physical ability to accurately discern, judge and record the visual clarity or precise detail of the data in relation to picturesque spatial formulae; and

- the imaging of the conditions and states of fragmentation and collapse.

The second series of work, is a body of silver and gold coloured pencil, charcoal and graphite drawings on paper that explores the role of imagination and invention in imaging the ruin. This series of images emerged during the later part of the project and in response to the finite timeframe of the initial case study research. The drawings reflect a change of emphasis that recognises the shifting and expanding nature of ruin portrayal. As such they have developed an independent life in response to the evolving nature of the studio explorations.

Discussion of actions and visual strategies used in this second body of work includes:

- spatial fragmentation and vertical stacking;
- fragmented architectural structures, shattered objects and the volatile state of their collapse; and
- non-illusionistic pictorial space and atmospheric lighting effects.

Finally, the role of intricate detail as a strategy which impedes the viewer's access into the pictorial space in both series of work is discussed. While this is employed quite differently in each series, the result is similar in that it forces spatial blockages and eliminates depth of field and foreshortening.

The fragmented material condition presented at unscenic sites also frustrates the wider romantic, nostalgic and idealised assumptions and aesthetic orthodoxies associated with ruin gazing, as their spatial disunity continues to incite anxiety and disillusionment rather than pleasurable reflection.

2. The Unstable Image and Imperfect Information: Challenges to Picturesque Space and Confronting Pictorial Space

The imaging of ruins is dependent on their depiction within the spaces they occupy and their pictorial relationship to those spaces. Traditionally, these have been depicted within the sweeping vistas of open, spatially receding landscape scenes.[13] As discussed in Chapter One, the illusionistic tradition of picturesque space has positioned the ruin as an anchoring structural element within a pictorial space that is often panoramic, and which diminishes to a vanishing point on the distant horizon line. In this tradition, the image of the structural ruin in landscape depends upon expansive, atmospheric distance and compositional unity to fully communicate what ruins in landscape have come to signify.[14] The depiction of close-range, intimate distance that enables the visualisation of surface detail or the massive scale of material remains filling the foreground space is generally absent from picturesque illusionistic space.

By comparison, contemporary urban ruins typically exist in spaces that are confined and restricted. Such spaces pose issues of physical and visual inaccessibility, and these restrictions frame judgements concerning the perception and rendering of distance as the space resists picturesque depth of field. Fragmentary glimpses through aperture fencing gaps, or views constrained by the limitations of sight line focus-points, also

[13] The scenic tradition of ruin representation is depicted through picturesque spatial formula using ruins as a compositional trope and in keeping with the romantic sensibility and its associated construction of ruin meaning. These are discussed in detail in Chapter One through the analysis of J.W.M. Turner's *Tintern Abbey: The Crossing and Chancel, Looking towards the East Window*, 1794 (Fig. 7).

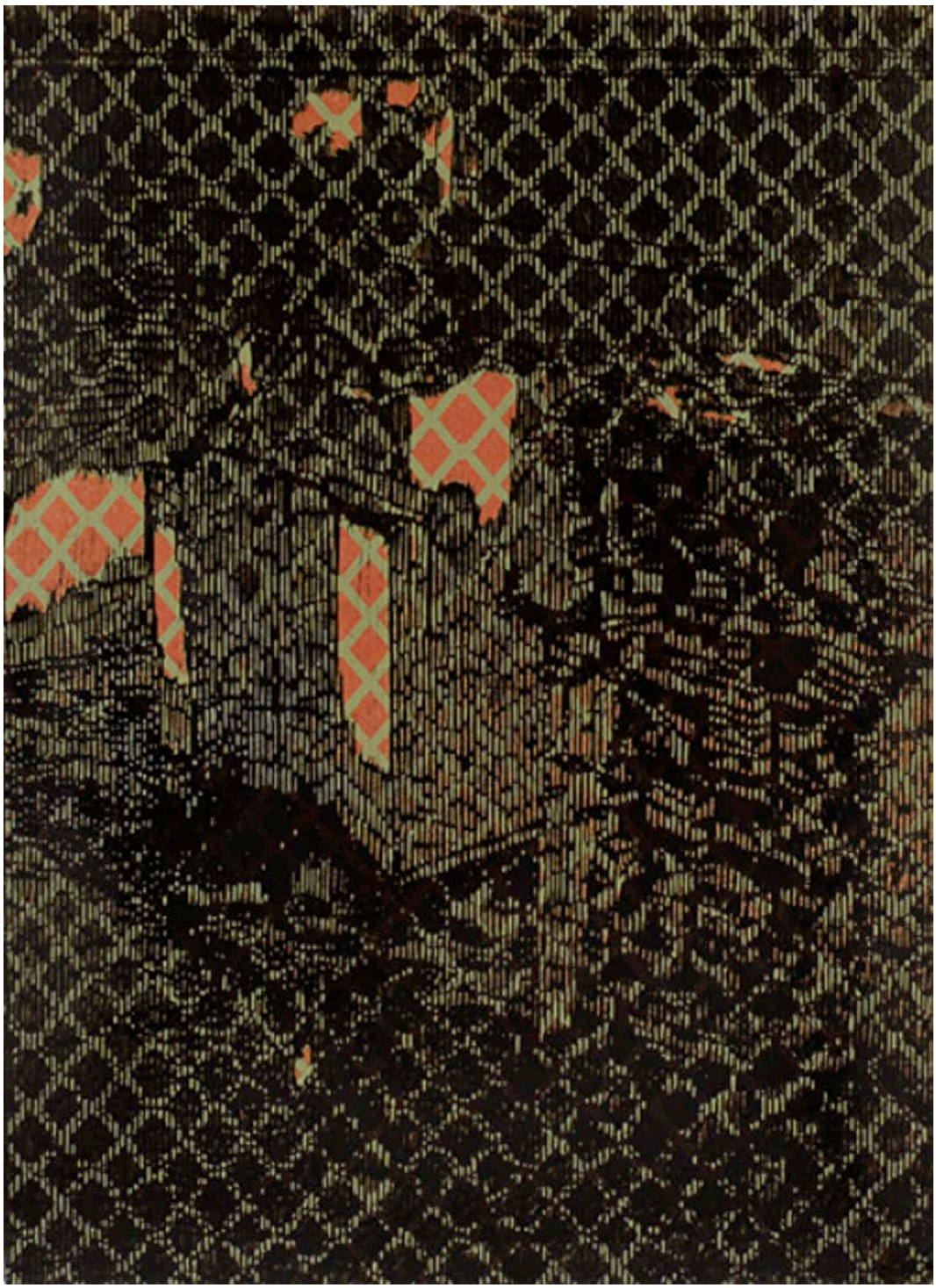
[14] Ruin meaning within this scenic tradition is a complex blending of both an idealised and nostalgic longing for a distant past, both medieval and classical and an encoded message regarding the passage of time, nature and human frailty. J.W.M. Turner and the associated poetic works of William Wordsworth expand the full significance of ruin meaning within this romantic tradition in detail in the discussion of artworks in Chapter One.

present perceptual challenges to the observational possibilities and analysis of this visual information. The reduction of the quality or the extensiveness of freely available information is referred to as imperfect information within this research, reflecting its representationally incomplete or piecemeal nature. Therefore, the spatial relationships that more accurately or more completely confront its spatial authenticity are those which visually preference the foreground space. This preference has been an intentional focus of the spatial relationships within the series of woodcut prints.

Untitled 24b black and mesh, 2015 (Fig. 50) represents a combination of strategies, employed in response to imperfect information. The subject matter is indicative of the visual features encountered at the ruin site, including the interlacing pattern of the perimeter wire and fabric-mesh barriers, as well as bollards, gates and hoardings. They combine as visual blockages and impediments, interrupting observation and reducing potential of visibility in both the distance and the panorama. This forces the vision into the foreground, resulting in a series of incomplete or imperfect glimpses, and shallow depth of field focus, which denies illusory pictorial space. In *Untitled 24b black and mesh*, foreground detail was enlarged into cut marks that break down the clarity and focus of the initial photographic data to form repetitive stacks of textural, interlacing lines of varying widths and lengths that dissolve the pictorial space. This lack of clear image definition is an essential component in understanding the role and delivery of imperfect visual information, as it produces flawed, incomplete formal outline definition.

The image was created by a series of sequential over-layering printings. The block matrix was printed and subsequently turned vertically and reprinted upside down over the previously printing colour layer, smothering and compressing much of the

Figure 50



Helen Wright
Untitled 24b black and mesh, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm
Collection of the Artist

underlying image layer. Combinations of cut paper stencils were also used to act as blockages, keeping certain sections intact in order to register as mesh aperture gaps. Interspersed flashes of high visibility colour contrasting with the overall sombre textural dullness characteristic of the site also contribute to the pictorial flatness. The final layer of impenetrably dense block-out black ink in combination with a geometric, diamond-shaped grid pattern smothers any illusory pictorial space. This aims to assert picture plane flatness and make reference to the visual difficulties of fully registering distance beyond the immediate shallowness of the foreground space.

3. The Discernible Image

The corollary of imperfect information is the discernible image. For the purposes of this research the idea of image discernibility is pivotal and is understood in two ways. First, in terms of how an enforced or predetermined physical distance may prevent, shape, organise or confuse what can be effectively perceived as unimpeded visible information. A combination of predetermined vantage points, protruding and intruding boundary bollards, fences, gates or the filter of screening of aperture gaps in mesh, affect aesthetic decisions such as compositional framing and depth of field. Such blockages to sightlines occur as a consequence of safety and compliance regulations and, in combination, configure and organise the range of visual information that can be clearly perceived, excluding, for example, access to mid-range observation of the pattern relationships between small elements of detail or the 360-degree sweep of the panorama or aerial perspective angles.

Second, distances that are physically predetermined and enforced by the official regulation of the perimeter barriers and targeted vantage points create protocols for viewing. This privileges what becomes visually freely available as source material and what is clearly delineated through image focus and resolution. The protocols of viewing are a fact of life at both heritage and contemporary ruin sites. They affect and reduce the range of scoping-out possibilities that are available for observing, collecting and rendering the distinctive and complex surface characteristics or qualities of a selected view or object. The range of aesthetic decisions, for example, the intricacies of stone wall or paint texture or edge clarity between surfaces may be blurred or obscured, and their tonal relationships dulled or flattened when visible only from a prescribed distance, which also predetermines the angle of the light source and thus compromises the formation of shadows.

The colour woodcut image, *Untitled Signature A in Red and Yellow*, 2015, is sourced from a photograph of an abandoned, graffiti-covered ruin wall taken through a railing aperture gap in a hoarding in front of the street-level perimeter fence (Fig. 51). The decision to record this graffiti signature tag and the contrasting wire-meshing pattern barrier was initially intended to interrogate and probe the dissolving surface textures of peeling paint against the rigid uniformity of the barrier mesh. The enforced street-level distance of the shot (a protocol of viewing) made it necessary to enlarge the camera focus, resulting in an image that blurred and softened the distressed textural detail of the tag, pictorially reducing the discernible contrasts between the two separate surfaces. Both surfaces were flattened, homogenised and reduced to spatially compressed patterns and shapes, losing tonal depth and definition from shadow. The discernable and distinctive identities of the two separate surfaces read as neither intact nor fragmentary, detailed forms.

A simplifying process of translation from the slick, unifying surface quality of the photographic image into a colour woodcut involved a drafting film layer of hand-drawn 'ghosting' biro marks that made the image receptive to the cutting process. This also involved probing the limitations of image discernibility and formal clarity as the woodcut process relies on a repetitive overlapping network of positive and negative cut marks and lines of varying scales and lengths that can, when printed, move optically in and out of alignment, thus dissolving the edge of forms and separating areas of visual clarity from those of linear collapse.

Figure 51

Helen Wright
Untitled Signature A in Red and Yellow, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm
Collection of the Artist

3.1 Colour and Discernibility

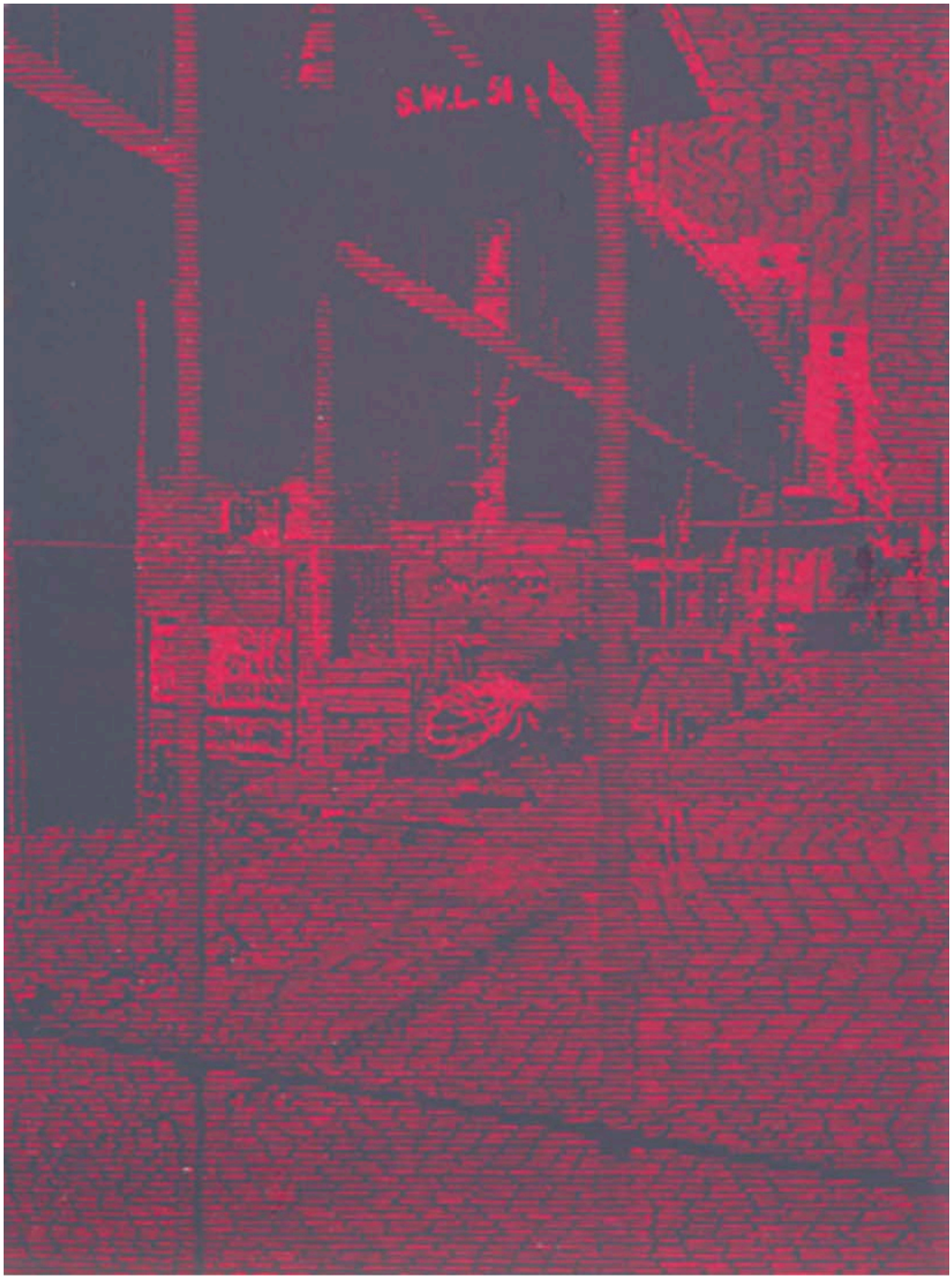
Colour as a visual strategy for disrupting discernibility within the woodcut series relates to establishing relationships between visibly intense coloured forms and their visual impact when encountered within a designated physical distance. As a graphic element, the inclusion of intense, saturated colours is relevant to image discernibility as the colours' conspicuousness or prominence visually prevails within sightline locations halting and positioning eye movement at specific visual punctuation points.

An example of this can be seen in *Untitled 8b*, 2015 (Fig. 52). The saturated fluorescent pink substrate layer is diffused within the stuttering linear cutting of the foreground. However, the intensity of the pink layer breaks through in concentrated sections where the cutting is at its widest, forming saturated colour markers. As solid, intense and distinguishable shapes, their function within the image is to block the eye movement from receding further, thus flattening the picture plane.

The visual limitations of discernibility do not centre upon physiological optical blending that can be created, for example, by the over-layering of two intense colours. However, small bands of moiré-like ripple distortion are created by the intersection of sequential overlays of background and foreground fluorescent colour, and by horizontal linear barrier-like bars of cutting of varying lengths and widths in combination with the impact of distance variability upon image clarity.

The choice of colour within the woodcuts series is not representational, formally descriptive or literal. It is specifically referential to the intrusive visual qualities, interpreted as horizontal banding bar lines, of physical blockages (such as safety barrier fencing, bollards or witches' hats) but is descriptively detached from these forms. These intense and shiny commercial colours and flat surfaces are familiar as visual deterrents

Figure 52



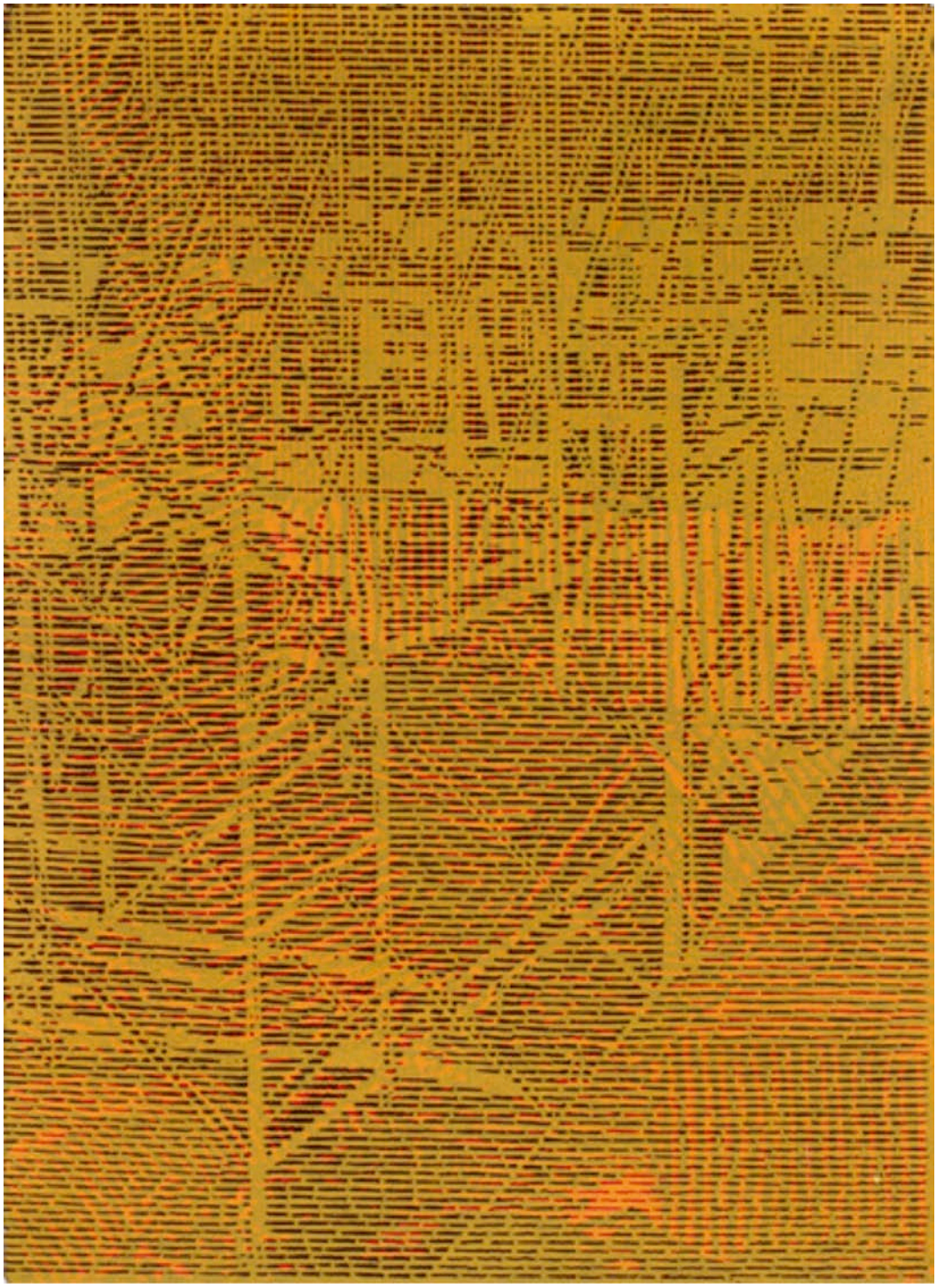
Helen Wright
Untitled 8b, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm
Collection of the Artist

at unscenic contemporary ruins or construction sites, often appearing as both concentrated block colour intrusions or continuous plastic and fabric webbing patterns within a dull or commonplace landscape of tertiary earth colours. The industrial, high-visibility colours perform as directors and safety regulators for physical and spatial access and function as, if en masse or at a large scale, a visual assault of halting flatness within a contrasting landscape of textural confusion. The attention-seeking, 'readymade' (Batchelor 2000, p. 104) artificial and brilliant quality of the colour creates a distinct anchoring separation from visual and perceptual confusion. This provides flat, geometrical, deadpan spatial blockage points that halt the eye from a continuous scanning search for order through the clutter. Such ready-mades represent noisy colour and their boldness and reflective intensity resist any sense of peaceful visual reflection. In this way, they contribute to image discernibility by acting as solid, bulking, accurate markers of focused and clearly delineated visual information. Fluorescent reds, oranges and yellows predominate, but fluorescent pinks and greens from signage or clothing are also prominent. The colour surfaces are metal, shiny or rigid commercial plastics, and their regularity is visually uncompromising and therefore in strong contrast to the complexity of the tertiary earth colour. As Batchelor says, they are '(m)ore urban colours than the colours of nature. Artificial colours, city colours, industrial colours' (2000, p. 106). By comparison, the subdued earth colours that surround them at ruin sites have low-key tonal value and range but as textural elements within sandstone blocks or brickwork, for example, they provide dense and intricate detail. Should this occur in the immediate foreground, their active and dense surface tactility responds to the cutting as an undulating band of massing linear detail.

Pictorially, as a graphic element, the isolated outbursts of intense, high-key colour defines and focuses as the eye first gravitates to the explosiveness of saturated colour.

The nuances of value and tone that exist in tertiary colour cannot compete for attention, particularly if access beyond the immediate foreground is denied. In association with the enlargement of intricate detail sections of the photographic source material, these indicating markers of high-visibility colour have also been enlarged to saturate large sections of the page. An example of this is *Untitled 17b*, 2015 (Fig. 53). The image references the colour of metal barrier mesh, high-visibility signage, scaffolding and street graffiti, which present the bright high-key, saturated sheen of enamel colour. This is reinterpreted through the use of commercial offset-printing inks containing gloss varnish finishes that echo the distinctive lurid characteristics of street art, and commercial and industrial surface coatings.

Figure 53



Helen Wright
Untitled 17b, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm
Collection of the Artist

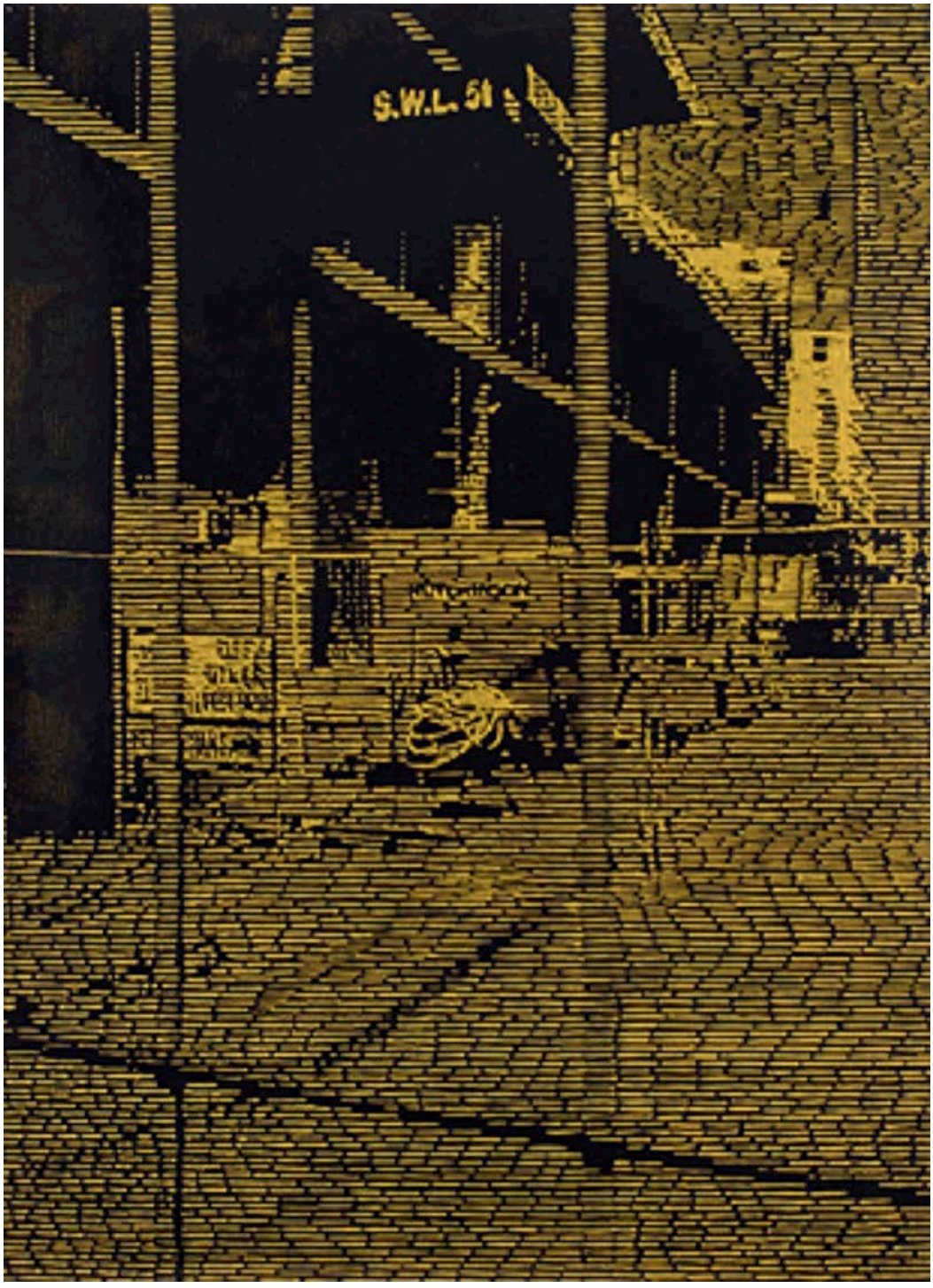
3.2 Moiré and the Discernible Image

The role of interference patterning such as moiré is also of interest to the project as a type of visual disturbance which compromises discernibility by overloading sensory and visual information, thus confusing formal elements such as focus, distance, descriptive detail, colour relationships and tonal nuance. The visual destabilisation of moiré is a strategy for connecting the perceptual and optical challenges presented by the detail of barrier screen mesh patterning with the physical reality of a ruin site. It is the overlapping grid-like barring of the warp and weft of mesh fabric or wire which creates the potential for a moiré pattern to disrupt precise and accurate discernibility. This effect causes a shimmering instability, as images hover and dissolve between states of comprehensibility and confusion. The oscillating surface quality of moiré interference questions the corporeal experience of seeing and reading visual information as conclusively absolute and infallible. Moiré interference is a deceptive visual blockage producing spatial uncertainty that challenges the accurate and reliable judgement of foreground/background distance, and undermines traditional picturesque spatial formulae and the perception of colour and detail. Moiré, as an optically vibrating sensation challenges the possibility of accurate, in-depth and nuanced image description.

Within the woodcut series, the overlapping webbing of mesh patterning was interpreted through a stuttering cutting action which, when combined with variations in mark width and length, caused a linear undulating and rippling effect akin to moiré within sections of the images. This linear irregularity destabilised accurate evaluation and discernment calling into question the delivery of illusory spatial information by creating wave-like distortion and motion within the foreground spaces.

An example of this rippled cutting is found in the colour woodcut image, *Untitled 9b*, 2015 (Fig. 54). Interpreting complex visual information through the woodcut technique

Figure 54



Helen Wright
Untitled 9b, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm
Collection of the Artist

is a reductive process. The complexities of foreground texture within the original source material have been subsumed by the horizontal irregularities and inaccuracies of the stuttering rift marks, causing a visually indecisive foreground sliding motion within the cuts. The effect of this strategy is to deny the representation of both surface texture and illusory space within the immediate foreground section of the image. This contrasts with an illusory depth within the mid-ground section, where the cut bands retain a spatially descriptive quality and recede to a vanishing point.

As a visual strategy, the ripples create the type of destabilizing, sensational overload that can be fully experienced, for example, in the artwork, *Alla chitarra*, 2003 (Fig. 55) by Melbourne-based artist, Wilma Tabacco.

This artwork presents the dynamic of optical blending and colour opponent theory between green and red colours that produces emanating waves of shimmering magenta.[15] The repetition of banding vertical lines, superimposed at an acute angle with variations in length and width, creates a truly disorienting and pulsating moiré effect devoid of any representational reference point. Within this image, Tabacco has detached colour from form and from emotional affect, but it is her control of spatial depth through the ribbons of vertical barring stripes that provides a reference point for the creation of visual instability in my work. The horizontal banding and stacking of cut marks that appear in sections of my woodcut series function with a similar purpose, as disorienting, spatial barriers that destabilise accurate observation, limiting its information discernibility, creating and thus forcing an aesthetic response based upon imperfect information.

[15] Colour opponent theory relies on the linkage of three opposing colour pairings: blue/yellow, red/green and black/white. No two members of a pair can be seen simultaneously, thus there is no bluish yellow or reddish green. It relies on optical blending in order to create after-images that are complementary.

Figure 55

Wilma Tabacco
Alla chitarra, 2003
oil on linen
152.5 x 183.5 cm
Collection unavailable

4. Collage

In my second series of works – the drawings – collage is the principal method for disrupting picturesque space. Methodologically, collage is understood within this project as a constitutive process of alteration, de-construction and re-assembly that allows for a diverse, though deliberately chosen, range of source material images to be visually manipulated in scale and fragmented in form. The visual strategy of piling up or vertical stacking of seemingly unrelated fragments of varying scales located in shallow foreground space and in no particular logical order presents a collage element to the pictorial spatial construction. Collage also reinforces the initial method of combining cut fragments from disjointed sources at various scales, to produce the initial compositional source material for the drawing works.

The drawings in this series stem from my initial experiential on-site case study exploration, but have developed their own independent life. They present an alternative strategy that is inventive and less experientially based in its intent. As a series of works, the drawings have absorbed the concepts of instability, destabilisation and fragmentation, but also embrace the imaginative strategy of collage to portray instability through spatial fragmentation, in particular. The seemingly illogical process of collage was utilised to reconstruct the constituent source material fragments to form less reality-based scenarios.

The focus shifted from depicting glimpses of imperfect information, which was the focus of the woodcut images, but continued to acknowledge and reference them as essential elements of portraying the unscenic ruin. The drawings aimed to further utilise their implied spatial instability by synthesising a multiplicity of fragmented spatial

viewpoints and scales. The result is an impenetrable mass of intricately drawn detail pieced together with a range of considered representational objects into collages that I refer to as ‘scrap stacks’. The drawings imagine the state of collapse, relying on a deliberate and interventionist juxtaposition and amalgamation that utilises the collaging process of piecing together mismatched and spatially non-aligned components to convey the visual effect of destabilisation and instability.

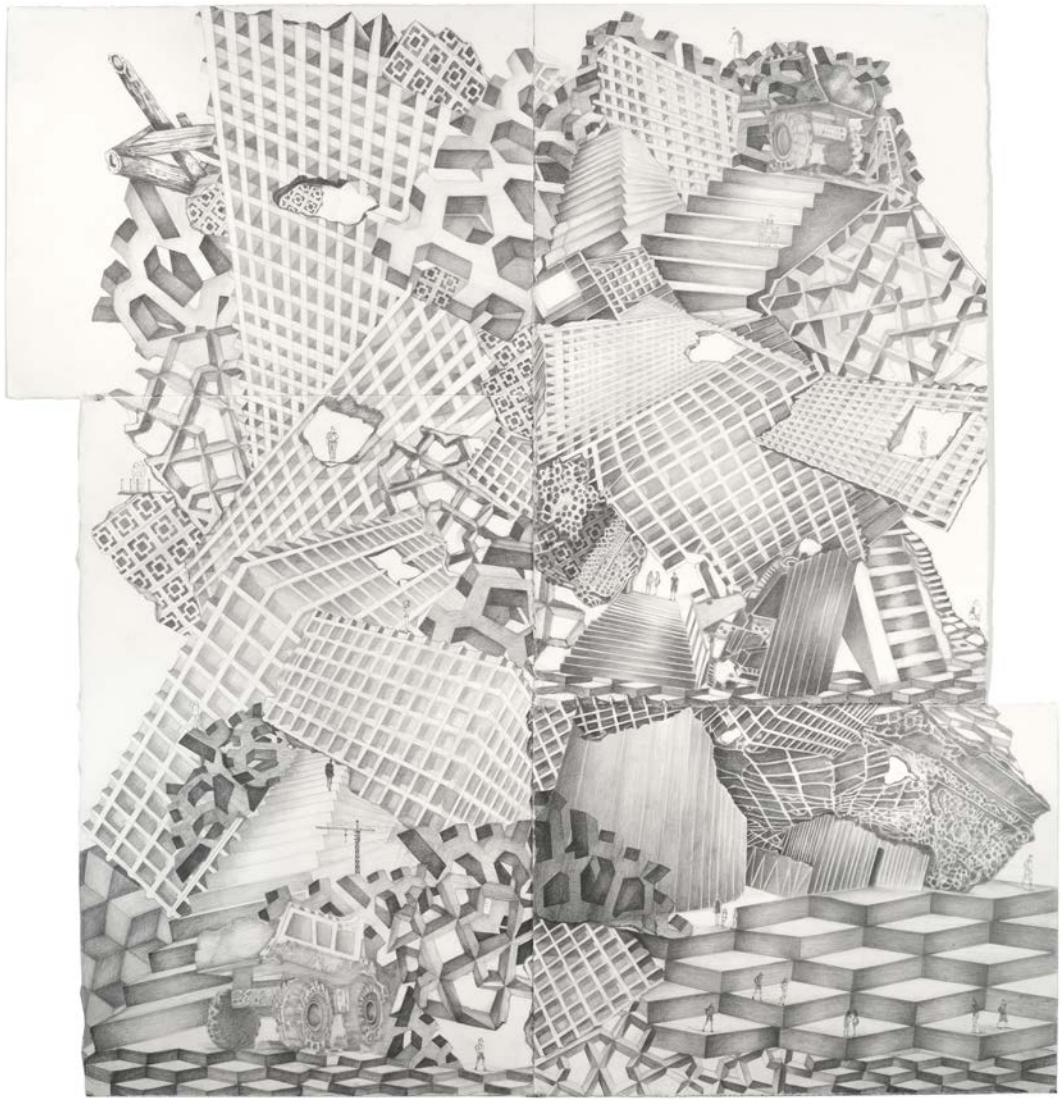
5. Fragmentation and Collapse

In order to depict fragmentation and collapse, the drawing, *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 2*, 2016-17 (Fig. 56), presents a combination of the visual strategies of unstable imagery, vertical stacking and intricate detail. It is a large work, part of a series of drawings created between 2016 and 2018, that seeks to construct impossible combinations of invented and imagined imagery by combining cut fragments taken from diverse photographic and hand-drawn source material. The sources include columns, pediments and pottery fragments, emblematically associated with the Classical ruin tradition, as well as interpreted photographic media cuttings and my own photos taken at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) site in Berridale, Tasmania.

Several alternative collages are constructed by overlaying one volatile object fragment over another in order to suggest that some objects block and obscure others, impacting upon one another as they fall through the shallow pictorial space. This imaginative and exploratory process is designed to test the possibilities during the process of adjusting the scale and the combination of arrangements. These are aligned and adjusted to maximise the fragmented compositional, spatial and content structure in order to deliver an all-out volatility and visual dynamism. The resulting compositional amalgamations are transferred to paper as loose, light outlines to be over drawn with graphite and silver or gold coloured pencil continuously sharpened to a fine point, to facilitate the intricately detailed drawing that is compositionally located in the immediate foreground of the picture plane.

Subtle tonal variations are created within the stacked elements, blending lighter to darker from the top to the bottom to reinforce the absence of receding space. The tonal

Figure 56



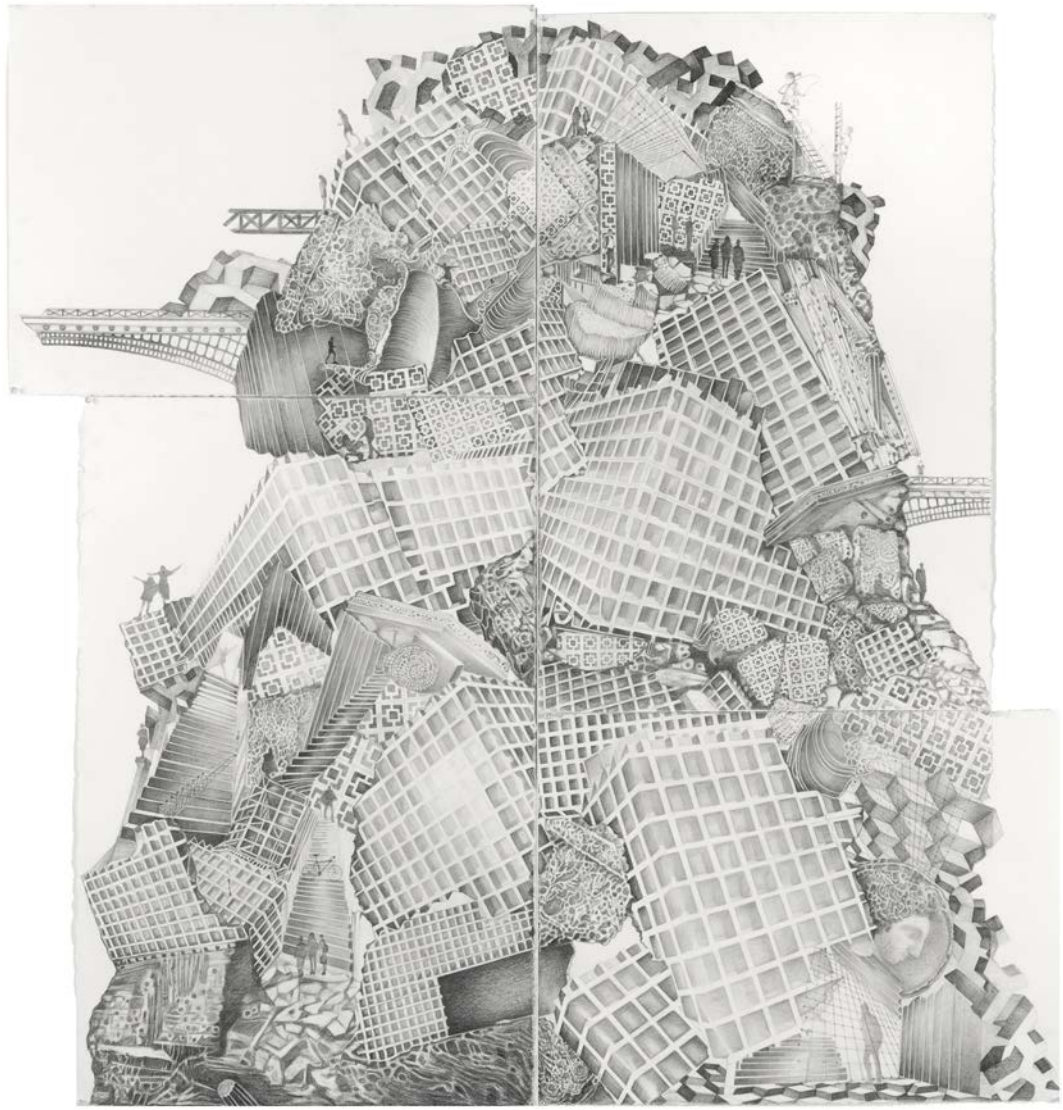
Helen Wright
An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 2, 2016-17
silver, gold and graphite pencil on paper
160 x 142 cm
Collection of the Artist

contrasts are also maximised in order to convey a convincing sense of volume, weight and form that evokes volatility and imminent collapse. These contrasts are required at the pivot points where objects are precariously balanced. The cool silver grey of the coloured pencil is rendered with subtle tonal contrasts and with no bold shadows, which can create dramatic pictorial pitch within grey-scale images. The drama of the instability and potential implosion is conveyed through the bulking scale of the overall piece, allowing the monumentality of a mishmash of fragmented objects.

As in the other drawings from this series, the fragmented objects are prosaic and unglamorous structural fragments typical of a building site or demolition zone. They are made visually enticing through the interplay of their graphic patterning and surface textures. For example, staircases with impossible gradients disappear into broken segments. Waffle-patterned retaining walls and tessellated flooring platforms ascend and fall in illogical and haphazard relationships. Sections of honeycomb-patterned bulkheads ram into one another and intersect with distorted lattice meshing that criss-crosses arbitrarily thoughout the slipping heap. The impression the work creates is of a dysfunctional cultural theme park bulging and caving-in under the collapse of its own weight.

An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 1, 2016 (Fig. 57) also depicts the strategies of fragmentation and collapse. The intention however, is not to replicate a representation of ruin as a folly fantasy: the drawings are conceptually driven by the observation that in the real-time upheaval of collapse anything can land anywhere, carelessly and senselessly. In imagining this state of upheaval, the harmonious and unified compositional strategies of the picturesque are fractured into a multiplicity of scales and viewpoints, thus denying a central vanishing point.

Figure 57



Helen Wright
An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 1, 2016
graphite pencil and silver coloured pencil on paper
160 x 142 cm
Private Collection

The photographic series, *Aftermath* by Joel Meyerowitz, discussed in Chapter Two, provided a point of reference for this observation as the destruction documented by his works portrays an eclectic and chaotic on-site reality evidenced by the bizarre combinations of amassed debris.

The source material for this example of my work comprises classical scenic ruin fragments together with drawing sections interpreted from a range of my own photographs, including: waffle-patterned retaining walls and staircase sections derived from MONA; artefacts from the Museum's collection; cropped sections from the metal scaffolding of the local Bridgewater Bridge; oil rig and crane engineering illustrations and pumice-like stones from landscaping suppliers; irregular beach stones; assorted staircase photos (my own and others drawn from architectural illustrations); decorative tile fragments; fun park machinery and throw-away consumer items from hardware catalogues. For example, the inclusion of a displaced Ferris wheel appears in the charcoal on paper image entitled *The Collapse of Fun*, 2016 (see Appendix Fig. 6).

The image presents a tangle of dislocated mechanical objects, the most intact and most recognisable of which is the Ferris wheel that protrudes from the right hand upper corner of the image. The work comprises many lopsided platforms, fragments of rollercoaster scaffolding and tubing, bicycle wheels and hubcaps, nuts, bolts, screws and natural objects, all unstable and chaotically oscillating out from the central axis of the work. The swinging movement that is apparent throughout the work is unpredictable as small pieces of debris fly out from the central mass, indicating an ongoing state of structural collapse.

The Ferris wheel is an identifiably iconic object as for example Millennium Wheel in London that is psychologically linked to the experience of gaiety and excitement but also for some, to irrational fear. The intention is to express a sense of the ironical in

relation to the imaging of contemporary ruin as the disintegration occurring within the image is incongruous with the associated function of its constituent parts, implying an unstable world in a state meltdown.

The image intentionally makes visual connections in its choice of subject matter to the unscenic ruins of marginalised modern architectural structures including amusement parks, shopping malls, holiday resorts, dinosaur parks, leisure centres and swimming pool complexes as well as the decrepitude of abandoned industrial estates that are popular viewing on internet sites. Grasping the capacity of such sites to arouse a public anxiety that undermines the ongoing belief in socially progressive ideals of modernism has been outlined in depth within the discussion of unscenic, prosaic ruin in Chapter Two.

Apropos to this, however, the image also considers the capacity of ruined funfair attractions imaged in meltdown to conjure a sense of the forlorn, the dystopian and the kitsch. In the popular imagination funfairs are places of imagination and wonder. However, when seen as decrepit waste grounds an incongruity presents that is at odds with their public image and function eliciting a sense of pathos and folly. The image of a fun fair Ferris wheel intact but precariously sliding into the chaotic collapse that overwhelms the other objects is strange and psychologically jarring thus tapping into broader community anxieties surrounding cycles of construction and destruction.

They are not randomly chosen, but selected to suggest a narrative; they reflect considered aesthetic choices that involve photocopy enlargement and reduction, repeated and overlapping object sections re-configured through the process of collage into a dense wall of intricate detail that covers the entire picture plane in order to block illusory space.

Within both *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 1* and *An Artist's Impression of*

MONA as a Ruin 2, there is no view through the collapsed mass to provide a vanishing point or panoramic horizon line that would suggest receding space. There is no access to an exit relief point as the collapsed components stack vertically in a shambolic, somewhat anarchic manner. The size of the fragments does not diminish as they rise up and their bulk contributes to the feeling of squashing heaviness. The absence of emotive colour also contributes to the lack of romantic theatricality. A small white area of background paper offers some visual relief within the left top panel, but the bulging mass appears too large to be contained within the edges of the image. The structural debris tumbles out of the picture plane in the right-hand top segment. This threatens to squash the other interlocking shards squeezed within this space. This activity simultaneously occurs within a shallow foreground that is densely packed with colliding, texturally surfaced patterns and intricate, drawn detail. A rejection of a harmonious compositional unity strengthens the visual strategy of depicting fragmentation.

Both images are intentionally divided into four mismatched parts that never quite coalesce in a way that would enable visual unity. This arrangement forms part of the overall disjointed, construction of the image that is in line with the creation of an unstable image by suggesting multiple viewpoints imploding and exploding simultaneously and forming a bulking pile of debris.

> The history of ruins in art records the gradual diminution of the human figure until it is merely a tiny marker of the enormity of the destruction that has been wrought on the scene. In the seventeenth century, the figures shrink to take part in incidental anecdotes in the foreground, or at the edge of the central drama of decay (Dillon 2005-06, p. 4).

Historical precedents for images of collapse and fragmentation containing figures such

as *Homeless, helpless, maimed and executed criminals forced to public camps,* 1755 by J.A. Steislinger (Fig. 58), such as the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, are well established within the imaging of ruination. The drawing series acknowledges this legacy of imaging catastrophe and its human toll noting that the imagery is invented from post-event accounts. The inclusion of a human element within the project's drawing series broadens to include figures surrounded by active collapse as well as figures that experience the instability post event. Both sets of figures appear simultaneously within separate parts of the large four panelled images, *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 1 & 2,* 2016-17 (Figs. 56 & 57).

Tiny figures also appear in the image *Return to Babylon*, 2016 (Fig. 59) in the form of a girl ambivalently skipping, and in *A Pile of Once Upon A Time*, 2016 as three children playing precariously close to a cliff edge.

The depiction of ruin portrayed by the drawing *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 2*, 2016-17 intentionally creates a compositional disunity and tension intended to image a dynamic, forceful state of active collapse within both of the top two panels of the four-panelled image. However, the lower panels of the work appear to be post the event of collapse, containing elements that suggest a construction phase is underway. A temporal separation is achieved by the lack of compositional coalescence within the four panels despite an overlapping of the structural elements as the panels join up through the central axis. It is as if the volatility is happening and has happened, simultaneously.

Pictorially, the two bottom panels, in particular, are steadied by the anchoring visual strategy of tessellated paving and by the introduction of a group of small figures that tour the ruin who also a fulfil an anchoring role that steadies the compositional disintegration. Isolated ant-like figures also appear in the top panels of the work, exploring through the active chaos but within the lower panels they are cast in the role

Figure 58

J.A. Steislinger
Homeless, helpless, maimed and executed criminals forced to public camps, 1755
ink on paper
size unavailable
collection unavailable

of tourists visiting any popular heritage ruin site. These groups of small figures are referenced from my personal archive of visitor groups at the MONA site as well as from my own tourist experiences of iconic ruins. As figurative characters they roam passively and obliviously through the monumental and chaotic spaces and are intended to contribute to the sense of temporal/ chronological paradox and allude to the disjointed and illogical sense of narrative.

The intention is to incorporate a miniature human interactive presence that connects the 17th century Grand Tour ruin experience exemplified by Piranesi's *Veduti di Roma* series of prints and my own contemporary experience of ruin sites and mass tourism. Piranesi's diverse range of figures including appear throughout the *Veduti di Roma* etchings and engravings and including tradesmen, labourers, peasants, cowherds, prisoners, and mothers with children as well as fashionably dressed bourgeois Grand Tourists actively populating the ruins of Rome and Tivoli, paralleling the illogical/ impossible scale relationships portrayed by the figures touring the *MONA* image.

The contribution of the figures within the drawings is for visual and compositional effect. Their dreamlike presence creates as sense of stillness amid the turmoil of fragmentation and collapse. In addition to this formal element I link them to the figures within Piranesi's *Veduti di Roma* print series that are eyewitnesses to the unfolding excavation of Rome. Formally and visually the figures activate the spaces they inhabit as their tonality ranges from solid silhouette to lighter, more transparent value that reflects the tonalities or counterbalances the tonalities of the areas of drawing that they activate.

However, and particularly in the image *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 2*, 2016-17 the portrayal of human interaction with ruins diverges from those of Piranesi as the tiny tourist figures in the *MONA* image appear disengaged from the ongoing

volatility occurring around them. Their sense of space or wellbeing is not disturbed or infringed by the engulfing monumental instability. Cast more in the role of detached, strolling sightseers or wandering urban explorers their emotional passivity implies of a sense of narrative, reliant on their exaggeratedly tiny scale in relation to the monumental collapse surrounding them reinforcing their emotional ambivalence to the massive scale of the dislodgement. They are not swamped or disturbed by the instability occurring in sections of the image. The intention of the work in this sense is not to create a sentimental story. It contains no sense of loss or connection to either the current structural chaos or with its previous intact state. The figures are not escaping the chaos; they are touring and exploring it, moving aimlessly through it, photographing it, climbing it.

Detachment resulting from a 'moving forward' itinerary may be endemic to the contemporary 'experience' of mass tourism as the whirlwind of bus tours ferry people to two or three ancient sites or museums per day. Such itinerary demands produce an inevitable disconnection that normalises and sanitises the impact of any ruin-forming catastrophic event.

The image simultaneously considers the actual time of a catastrophic event portrayed through instability and collapse. It also anticipates a future time when the emotional and the chronological distance enable a landmark, iconic site, like MONA, to be imagined in and after, its demise.[16] MONA as a cultural icon can be a romantic symbol of the rise and the fall of great wealth and cultural power. Like all ruins, MONA could be a

[16] The research also took into consideration Richard Flanagan's 2013 *The Monthly* article 'The Gambler' where museum owner David Walsh envisages MONA as a 'secular temple' and the 2014 conference paper entitled 'PIRANESI AND MONA: inspiration or retrospective myth' by MONA's Senior Research Curator, Jane Clark as an impetus for the imaginative speculations that result in the works *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 1 & 2*.

prosaically humbling sight in the immediate aftermath of its destruction.

In conclusion, the amassing of a variety of volatile, incomplete and broken representational objects depicts the unstable image common throughout the series of drawings. They are also presented in combination with the shards and fragments of contemporary, prosaic structural debris. As representational signs, these fragmentary remains convey ruin meaning, as their disorder, incompleteness and random scattering interrupt compositional, pictorial unity and harmony. Fragments, through a confusion of haphazard, awkward relationships, destabilise a unified spatial composition by collapsing and flattening the depth of field formulae characteristic of picturesque space and the illusory space of perspective.

6. Intricate Detail as a Visual Strategy

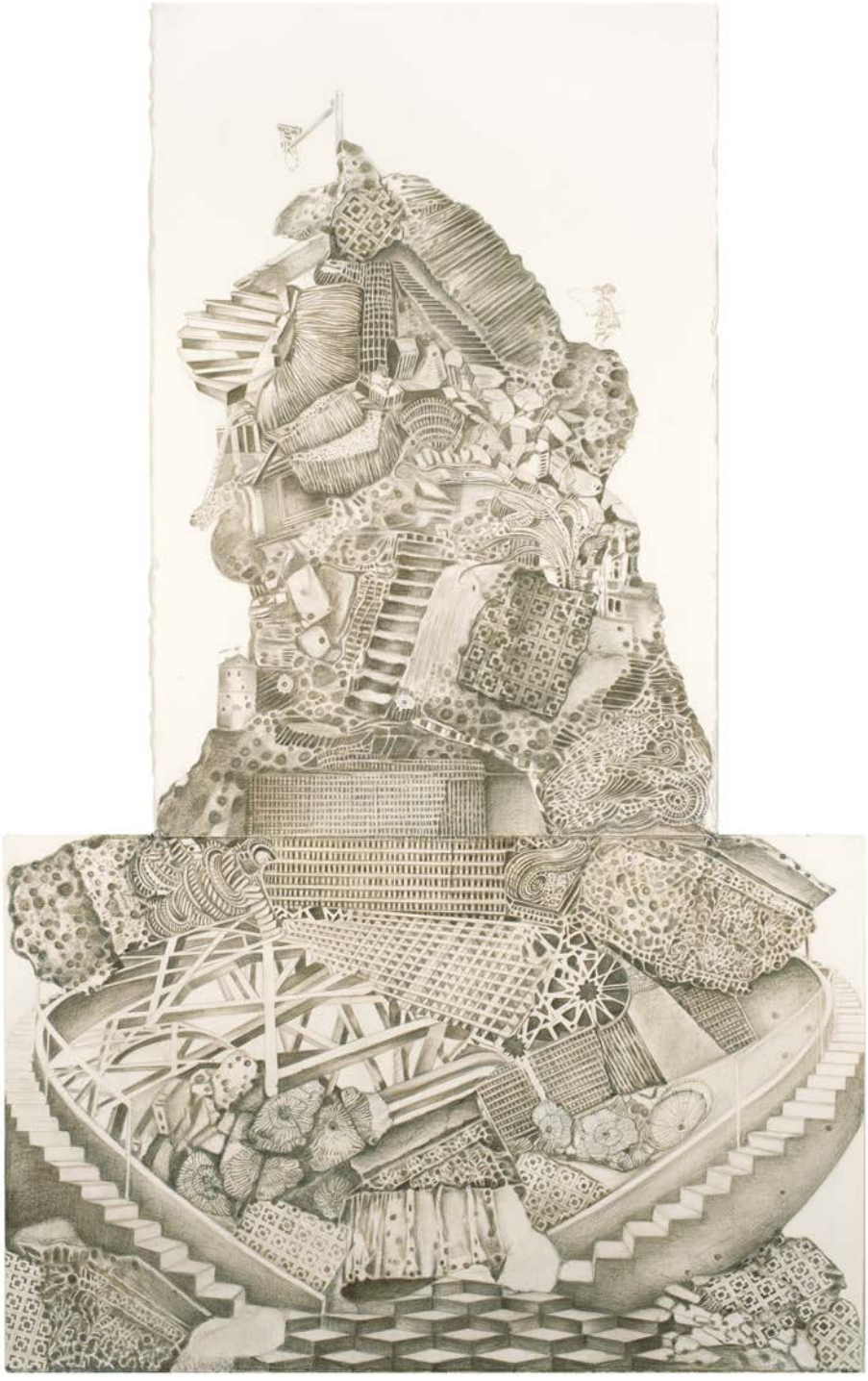
The use of intricate detail, as a denial of picturesque space, is common to both prints and drawings, although the visual outcomes are distinctly different. The following two images, *Return to Babylon*, 2016 (Fig. 59) from my drawing series and *After the Fire, no. 4*, 2014 (Fig. 60), a woodcut print, provide examples of the divergent outcomes and how these manifest pictorially. Imagery that is located solely in the spatial foreground preferences intricate detail: in this area objects have the most accurate surface and descriptive definition. When large areas of detailed patterning and dense, repetitive textural marks merge graphically to form compressed, solid and flat bands within the shallow foreground, the aim is to take the viewer's eye everywhere at once, confusing and destabilising what is immediately distinguishable, comprehensible or logical.

Intricate detail becomes a visual wall within the image *Return to Babylon*, 2016 and functions compositionally as a spatially compressed mass of representational pattern elements filling the entire bottom panel of the drawing with many objects which lose their individual, distinguishable identity. This extends to form a horizontally encircling obstacle that provides no exit point.

The treatment of the repetitive intermeshing of drawn marks, within the limited tonal range offered by the gold pencil, operates as a homogenising unit of visually uniformity. The marking density of the wall of intricately rendered detail counteracts pictorial space by acting as an interconnected layer of flatness.

Despite the representational textural recesses of some fragments, they are so densely interlocked, particularly within the central mass, that the distinctive characteristics

Figure 59



Helen Wright
Return to Babylon, 2016
gold coloured pencil on paper
168 x 102 cm
Collection of the Artist

Figure 60

Helen Wright
After the Fire, no. 4, 2014
panelled woodcut
152 x 112 cm
Collection of the Artist

of the objects are subsumed into the overall spread of similarly rendered debris. The restrictions that affect pictorial space are demonstrated within this work by the blanket of segmented waffle patterning, the lack of tonal contrast and the mass of compressed repetitive detail. The totality of their graphic melding overrides the recognition of the disparity between the separate parts, thus creating the visual spatial impasse.

6.1 Cut Marks as Detail

Within the woodcut prints, the enlargement of intricate detail, in combination with distance and image resolution, has functioned as a visual strategy that considers and responds to perceptual challenges that decrease, through physical blockage and predetermined vantage points, the range and quality of freely available visual information. Predeterminates such as these hinder the accuracy and clarity of distance vision, thereby, accentuating visual material that is concentrated in the immediate foreground space where their discernibility and focus remain precise. *After the Fire, no. 4,* 2014, provides an example of how I have addressed the enlargement of intricate detail interpreted through spatially blocking linear bands of cut marks that reduce the image resolution and discernibility.

Generally, and throughout the entire woodcut series, detail as a visual strategy relies upon the magnification of fragmented sections of the original source data that subsequently enlarges the sectional marks and cuts to fill the entire image. As enlargements, the fragmented details became the subject of the visual enquiry. The below-average quality of the distance data and the dominating proximity of the smothering mesh and wire grid screening within the picture plane determined the choice of the fragment section. In the subsequent sectional enlargements the shape and depth of the marks as well as their colour non-alignment imparted distinctive warp and weft detail in patterning, enabling the image to be read tonally as well as linearly.

Specifically, in the image, *After the Fire, no. 4*, 2014, the physicality of the cut detail forms an undulating, textural surface of pattern. Repeated cut lines gather to form this pattern and short incision marks layered with overlapping films of transparent dull colour create a breakdown in edge clarity as the flatness destroys a focal point and takes the eye everywhere at once. A confusion of spatial and perceptual discernibility results

from the congested clustering detail of the cut marks and this is determined by the width, size and the closeness of their separation spacing. The inked image areas, the disorientation of the vanishing point, and the overlapping linear banding of the cutting dissolve the representational nature of the original image source, echoing the visual deficiencies of the original data. Broken down into dense bandings of positive and negative cut marks, the image predominantly reads as shapes and as a congested layering of stipple patterns in their own right, visually functioning independently from representational form. This is enhanced when the images appear to fluctuate in and out of focus, depending on the positioning distance of the viewer from the image. They appear more recognisable from a distance and indiscernable at close range, as the image clarity at this proximity is reduced to a visually impenetrable wall of clustering cuts and faulting lines.

7. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has established that the illusory qualities of picturesque spatial formulae are inadequate to deal with the experience of unscenic collapse and the subsequent chaotic visual overload found at contemporary urban ruin sites. It presents two distinctly different approaches to imaging these ruinscapes: one is based on a response to the limitations of experience arising from the barrier blockages that deny access to such sites; the other on invention, imagination and collage. The strategies share commonalities of purpose in avoiding picturesque space within the artwork through the acknowledgement that the actuality of physical and perceptual experience demands a vastly different aesthetic response from those evident in the scenic ruin tradition. In both cases, conventional figure/ground relationships are destabilized. The ruins are treated in a prosaic manner, stripped of the nostalgic sentimentalising characteristic of the romantic tradition of ruin gazing. By frustrating our ability to access the scene, the works in both series seek to discomfort the viewer, by evoking some of the same anxiety provoked by ruins which disturb optimistic visions of modernity.

Conclusion

Within Western culture, ruins – both contemporary and historical – matter. In the present day, they have the capacity to touch a nerve socially, politically, psychologically, culturally and emotionally. Whether the result of uncontrollable destructive forces or simply neglect, they are a raw source of anxiety, distress and social urban destabilisation. This project has identified a recent revitalisation of scholarly and popular interest in the ruin, as borne out by a number of blockbuster exhibitions surrounding historical and contemporary ruin representation. These include *Ruin Lust: Artists' Fascination with Ruins, from Turner to the Present Day* at Tate Britain, London, in 2014, which coincided with the commencement of the research project but was not directly responsible for its genesis. Understanding our ongoing aesthetic fascination with the scenic tradition of the ruin, as well as engaging with the reality of contemporary, unscenic ruins, has driven this studio-based research project. It has sought to identify and satisfy new visual demands for representing their contextual and aesthetic complexities.

The project began with an inquiry into the venerable field of historic ruin gazing scholarship, analysing key examples from the picturesque tradition by artists such as Piranesi, Gilpin, Turner, Constable and Friedrich. The research literature is extensive and the subject of constant reassessment and reinvention in relation to the enduring nostalgic, monumental and idealised representations of the ruin motif, and stands in

contrast to the unglamorous representation present-day ruin. The representation of the unscenic ruin, however, is less obviously explored within ruin scholarship. This has presented an opportunity for this research to identify and assess its wider significance by way of the case study research, and to extrapolate into its contextual ramifications for unscenic ruins more broadly. Influential in this reappraisal of ruins as prosaic, rather than heroic or nostalgic, has been the work of artists such as Robert Smithson, Ed Ruscha and Merilyn Fairskye who, rather than treating them as sites of aesthetic appreciation, emphasise their mundanity. Their treatment of ruins as ordinary induces a sense of discomfort in the viewer, rather than one of nostalgic reverie. Similarly, in my work, I have sought to disturb the viewer by frustrating their ability to enter the scene or to discern the ruins clearly.

This studio-based project has originated and been sustained through my assessment of the representational disparity between the traditional scenic depiction of ruins and my developing interest in its contemporary experiential reality. The amount of data and interest in the recent contemporary ruin is astounding and more intriguing than I expected. It encompasses: decrepit and abandoned shopping malls; amusement parks; half-built cities; disintegrating Modernist residential tower blocks; and polluted industrial wastelands. The scope of controversy and the intensity of debate within this field is surprising, particularly in relation to the images, academic essays, conferences and films related to Detroit's dilapidation and the representation of this through Ruin Porn.

These ruin sites are the antithesis of World Heritage ruin sites, and their images provoke a sense of pathos, repugnance and anxiety. Since they have not been subjected to the same sort of heritage and beautification regimes characteristic of ancient ruin sites, I would argue that their material appearance is being misrepresented by the photo shoots typical of Ruin Porn.

My interest was to engage at face value with their authentic, unscenic appearance, characterised by unsightly mess and dilapidation and to address how best to depict this without revisiting the visual theatricality of Ruin Porn. Processes of observation, documentation and evaluation developed in order to make visual comparisons, as I sought to assess the perceived spatial contrasts between the scenic framings of ruin and those of the contemporary experience of real-time ruin, both catastrophic and prosaic.

The creation of artwork that accounted for the disparities between the framings of the idealised aestheticised emblematic ruin and the raw and unruly reality of real-time ruin required visual strategies based on their representative spatial conditions, such as instability, destabilisation, fragmentation and the state of collapse. The outcomes of studio artwork developed in relation to interpreting these states of ruin in the form of interference patterning, distance and discernibility, colour and discernibility, intricate detail in drawing, and as cut marks, moiré, collage and vertical stacking. The research pinpointed these methodological strategies as those best suited to account for the visual and perceptual complexities encountered when imaging and imagining pictorial space at unscenic urban ruin sites.

The intention behind the colour woodcut series was to demonstrate that, when connecting with an unscenic contemporary ruin site, physical and visual impediments such as perimeter barriers and sightline blockages restrict the panoramic background distance, the middle ground space and vanishing point perspective, which form picturesque space. This conclusion was derived from a case study observation of a particular local site, where the photographic data was compromised in terms of its expansiveness and discernibility. The result was the supposition that the foreground space provided a focal point for imaging the site as this space offered the most accurate and detailed visual information, albeit in a fragmented and ruined state. This prompted

the belief that connecting with the actuality of the conditions of unscenic ruins, incorporating their physical impediments and their visual compromises, and identifying the states most characteristic of the site (such as instability, destabilisation and fragmentation and collapse) could be a positive source for the creation of artwork that better portrayed its lack of picturesque spatial and aesthetic properties. The ruin subject matter in this foreground space ranged from a chaotic mishmash of remnant foundational footings to a bland wasteground of rubbish, weeds and foetid water pools, but the barrier mesh and hoardings that formed the perimeter fencing always visually compromised the interpretation of this material.

However, within the drawing series the sense of discomfort and frustration that such sites elicit was conceived imaginatively, emphasising prosaic instability as distinctly illogical, dislocated and unbalanced. This is depicted through collage, intricate drawing and vertical stacking. The states of disunity, disorder, fragmentation and collapse were imagined in combination with the elimination of vanishing point perspective and the prioritisation of the foreground space, which negated the aesthetics of the romantic ruin and the picturesque.

Historically, picturesque space has relied upon a harmonious spatial relationship with the scenic ruin, but the visual experience of the case study site was characterised by the disharmony of fragmentation and instability. Establishing the inadequacy of the picturesque tradition to image the authentic visual disarray of the unscenic ruin was central to the visual outcomes of this research and to the wider field of ruin representation. It resulted in a new pathway that established instability and fragmentation as new tropes to image such unscenic sites.

A future direction for this research pathway to contribute to ruin scholarship lies in shifting the focus from the urban site to the debased, unstable and fragmented sites that

exist within the natural world, such as mining site ruins. Sites within the natural world are often linked to the sublime, so an interrogation of the adequacy of this tradition to image states of unscenic ruin would provide an interesting corollary direction to this research project's exploration of romantic and picturesque aesthetic traditions. Similar barrier impediments, sightline obstructions and the dynamics of high visibility colour are present at disused mining sites, demonstrating unique spatial and perceptual conditions that would create a distinctly new set of visual challenges.

The research also sees scope for further exploration into the formal elements of high-visibility and high-intensity colour as a source of optical destabilisation and fragmentation that are absent from the visual field of current ruin scholarship. This was an area of interest in the early stages of the project but remained undeveloped within the project's focus.

The significance of this project's contribution to knowledge in this field and its potential for further research lies in its identification of the disconnect between conventional tropes of ruin and those of the real-time contemporary urban experience of ruin as site. Such sites demonstrated a unique and finite set of overlapping visual and physical circumstances regarding unsightly crater-like appearance, location and inaccessibility. This visual and physical inaccessibility has potential implications for future heritage ruin sites, whether architectural or natural, in an era of growing mass tourism. Their popularity as 'must see' destinations, combined with their fragility, will make the introduction of prescribed viewing platforms and regulated walking paths at these sites essential to organise and limit their visual and corporeal experience.

This project has been aware of the implications for cultural planning. Balancing the protocols of protection with extensive visual and physical accessibility, particularly in respect of the unrestricted panoramic view, was taken into consideration in the early stages of the research, even though there was little of heritage value left at the site.

These intrusions and restrictions limit visual access to wider cultural experiences and present similar visual frustrations to my own. This creates unwanted flow-on effects for cultural tourism more broadly, and establishes a case for the findings of this research to contribute beyond the field of contemporary ruin.

This research concludes that the prosaic qualities of unscenic contemporary ruins elicit unsettling and disturbing responses rather than aesthetically pleasurable or nostalgic ones. The artwork outcomes have demonstrated that a visual engagement with the immediate unscenic conditional states of instability and fragmentation disrupts the idealised, the heroic, the progressive, and the optimistic allure of scenic ruins. It is, however, an inescapable fact that the unscenic ruin 'calls for demolition' and is therefore a temporal state, presenting a stimulating, unique but transitory opportunity for visual exploration (Williams 2010, p. 1).

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8 John Constable, *Hadleigh Castle, The Mouth of the Thames – The Morning after a Stormy Night*, 1829, oil on linen, 121.9 x 164.5 cm. Collection: National Gallery, London.

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31 Ed Ruscha, *Blue Collar Tires*, 1992, acrylic on canvas, 137.2 x 304.8 cm. Collection: Museo Nacional Centro De Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.

32 Ed Ruscha, *The Course of Empire Expansion of the Old Tires Building*, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 137.2 x 304.8 cm. Private Collection.

33 Ed Ruscha, *Psycho Spaghetti Western #7*, 2010-2011, acrylic on canvas, 177.8 x 350.5 cm. Collection: Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills, California.

34 Merilyn Fairskye, *Playground*, from 'Plant Life (Chernobyl)' series, 2011, pigment print, 40 x 109 cm. Collection of the Artist.

35 Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014 showing the site as wasteground

36 Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014 showing the site as wasteground

37 Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014 showing ruderal vegetation and debris

38 Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014 showing ruderal vegetation and debris

39 Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014 showing graffiti, perimeter fencing and original sandstone site wall

40 Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014 showing graffiti, perimeter fencing and original sandstone site wall

41 Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014 showing barrier fencing and original sandstone site wall

42 Documentary research images from the Myer site, 2014 showing barrier fencing and original sandstone site wall

43 Roy Lichtenstein, 1969, *Haystack no. 2*, lithograph on paper, 34.2 x 59.7 cm. Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

44 Sigmar Polke, *Girlfriends*, 1965-66, dispersion paint on canvas, 150 x 190 cm. Collection: Sammlung Froehlich, Stuttgart.

45 Sigmar Polke, 1966, *Bunnies*, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm. Collection: Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.

46 Christiane Baumgartner, *Formation, no. 1*, 2006, woodcut on Kozo paper (diptych), 172 x 226 cm. Private Collection.

47 Christiane Baumgartner, *Formation no. 2*, 2006, woodcut on Kozo paper (diptych), 180 x 234 cm. Private Collection.

48 Juan Gris, *The Sun Blind*, 1914, gouache, paper chalk and charcoal on canvas, 92.1 x 72.7 cm. Collection: Tate Britain, London.

49 Robert Klippel, *LS111*, 1979, felt pen and collage of photographed machine parts, 41.5 x 58.5 cm. Private Collection.

50 Helen Wright, *Untitled, 24b black and mesh*, 2015, colour woodcut on paper, 76 x 56 cm. Collection of the Artist.

51 Helen Wright, *Signature A in Red and Yellow*, 2015, colour woodcut on paper, 76 x 56 cm. Collection of the Artist.

52 Helen Wright, *Untitled 8b*, 2015, colour woodcut on paper, 76 x 56 cm. Collection of the Artist.

53 Helen Wright, *Untitled 17b*, 2015, colour woodcut on paper, 76 x 56 cm. Collection of the Artist.

54 Helen Wright, *Untitled 9b*, 2015, colour woodcut on paper, 76 x 56 cm. Collection of the Artist.

55 Wilma Tabacco, *Alla chitarra*, 2003, oil on linen, 152.5 x 183.5 cm. Collection unavailable.

56 Helen Wright, *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 2*, 2016-17, silver, gold and graphite pencil on paper, 160 x 142 cm. Collection of the Artist.

57 Helen Wright, *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 1*, 2016, graphite pencil and silver coloured pencil on paper, 160 x 142 cm. Collection of the Artist.

58 J.A. Steislinger, *Homeless, helpless, maimed and executed criminals forced to public camps*, 1755, ink on paper, size unavailable. Collection unavailable.

59 Helen Wright, *Return to Babylon*, 2016, gold coloured pencil on paper, 168 x 102 cm. Collection of the Artist.

60 Helen Wright, *After the Fire, no. 4*, 2014, panelled woodcut, 152 x 112 cm. Collection of the Artist.

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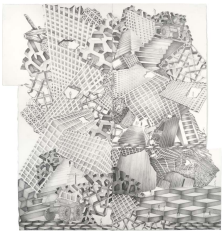
Appendix 1

List of Exhibited Images (Helen Wright)

Helen Wright (b. 1956)

1 *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 1*, 2016
graphite pencil and silver coloured pencil on paper
160 x 142 cm

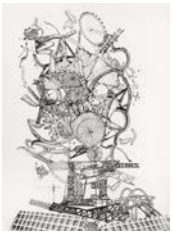


2 *An Artist's Impression of MONA as a Ruin 2,* 2016-17
graphite pencil and silver coloured pencil on paper,
160 x 142 cm

3 *Return to Babylon,* 2016
gold coloured pencil on paper
168 x 102 cm

4 *Renovate or Detonate,* 2016-17
coloured pencil and graphite on paper
157 x 102 cm

5 *A Pile of Once Upon a Time,* 2016
charcoal on paper
145.5 x 95cm

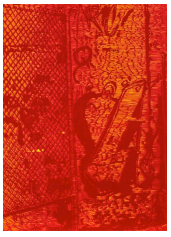


6 *The Collapse of Fun,* 2016
charcoal and graphite pencil on paper
180 x 120 cm

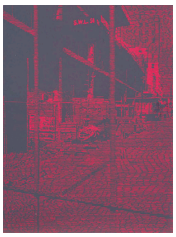
7 *The Speed of Collapse in the Age of Stupid No. 1*, 2018
charcoal and graphite pencil on paper
150 x 92 cm

8 *The Speed of Collapse in the Age of Stupid No. 2*, 2018
charcoal on paper
180 x 120 cm

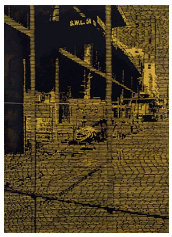
9 *Untitled 24b black and mesh*, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm



10 *Untitled Signature A in Red and Yellow*, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm



11 *Untitled 8b*, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm



12 *Untitled 9b*, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm

13 *Untitled 17b*, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm

14 *Untitled 28b,* 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm

15 *Untitled 14c,* 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm

16 *Untitled 22b,* 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 57 cm

17 *Untitled 30b*, 2015
colour woodcut on paper
75 x 54. 5 cm

18 *After the Fire, no. 4,* 2014
colour woodcut on paper
152 x 112 cm

19 *Untitled 16b,* 2015
colour woodcut on paper
76 x 56 cm

Appendix 2

Selected Curriculum Vitae (Helen Wright)

Helen Wright (b. 1956)

25 Solo Exhibitions – 1987-2018

9 at Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, Victoria.

5 at Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra, ACT.

11 at Bett Gallery, Hobart.

The Edge of Reason, curated by Simon Gregg, Gippsland Regional Art Gallery, Sale, Victoria.

Selected Group Exhibitions Hobart – Highlights

The Story of Australian Printmaking 1851-2005, curated by Roger Butler, Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

Look Again – Contemporary Works on Paper, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Australian Drawing, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria.

Australian Drawing Research, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney, NSW and touring China

A Survey of Recent Tasmanian Art, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania.

Strange Trees, curated by Jane Stewart, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania.

Prizes

Winner: The Waterhouse Natural History Prize, Works on Paper, 2012.

Winner: The Hutchins Works on Paper, 2011.

Winner: Burnie Print Prize, 2009.

People's Choice: City of Hobart Art Prize, 2002.

Selected Residencies

Visual Arts Board Studio, Barcelona, Spain.

Glasgow Print Workshop, Glasgow, Scotland, UK.

Grants

Visual Arts Board New Work Grants: 1994, 2000, 2010.
Arts Tasmania Project Grants: 1994, 1997, 2000.

Selected Publications

Highlights of the Collection, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia.
Building A Collection, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia.
Art and Australia, 1999, Article by Victoria Hammond.
Artists Profile, April 2009, Profile by Steve Lopez.

Selected Collections

Artbank, Australia.
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales.
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia.
Australian National Gallery, Canberra, ACT.
Burnie Regional Art Gallery, Burnie, Tasmania.
Devonport Regional Art Gallery, Devonport, Tasmania.
Gippsland Regional Art Gallery, Sale, Victoria.
Macquarie Bank Collection, Sydney, New South Wales.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria.
The National Works on Paper Collection, Mornington Regional Gallery, Victoria.
Parliament House Collection, Canberra, ACT.
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Queensland.
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania.